

Interview with Jesse Hamilton

Interview by John DePerro

Date of Interview: 22 April 2003

Location: Ft Eustis, VA

**DePerro:** Here we are. This is part of the Fort Eustis oral history project. I'm helping the museum out with that. My name is John DePerro. Today we are doing to oral history of...

**Hamilton:** Jesse Hamilton.

**DePerro:** Okay, why don't you give us your social security number, or whatever your Army numbers were, go through that stuff then give us a talk.

**Hamilton:** There were several. If we start with xxxxxxxx, because that was my enlisted number when I came in many, many years ago. I came in, enlisted...[[note: Service numbers started with US for draftees, ER for Reserve, NG for National Guard and RA for Regular Army. The Army eventually started using SSAN for service numbers.]]

**DePerro:** Why don't you start back, tell us where you where born, too, give us a little background on who Jesse is.

**Hamilton:** Sure, I was born in South Carolina in 1935, and as I understand a little bit of the history of it that was a period when there was a great flood somewhere. My daddy tells me about it, and tornados came through and tore up the place, and I had papers in South Carolina from Georgia. I share that with you because my daddy's 94 and he tells me about stuff like that, I wasn't there, but, I'm sure that was it.

**DePerro:** What town were you born in?

**Hamilton:** Not in a town, out in the country.

**DePerro:** Okay, you were born at home?

**Hamilton:** I was born at home.

**DePerro:** No hospitals.

**Hamilton:** Well, now that that you bring that up, daddy tells me that he remembers when there were no hospitals. Well, he remembers, you know, from that myopic view of his life that there was no hospitals for people to go to. There were some, but he didn't go to them. But, no, you're right, I was born at home in Oconee County, South Carolina.

**DePerro:** What part of the state is that in?

**Hamilton:** That's in upstate South Carolina, in fact that's what they call it now. I've never heard of upstate until about, I guess, five or six years ago.

**DePerro:** So, it wasn't down on the coast, it was way inland?

**Hamilton:** It was way inland, it was up near the North Carolina and Georgia border, in the northwestern part of the state.

**DePerro:** Did you go to school there, I take it you grew up in that town?

**Hamilton:** Yeah, I grew up in that part of the country there, but let me go back again because something else is equivocal about 1935, being born at home in 1935 in South Carolina, like daddy says there weren't many hospitals. In this case my mom was assisted by a midwife, and what happened back then is lots of midwives didn't write or read much, and my birth did not get recorded and that comes in to another story many, many years later when I'm trying to find out who am I? So, back then Ms. (?), I don't remember her last name, was the midwife for my mom, and of course she didn't put me down and I was never anywhere until we had to go back to the census many, many years later to finally figure out who I was. I've got it now. I've got a paper that says who I am. That's a part of urban South Carolina in 1935.

**DePerro:** So, you grew up there, you went to school?

**Hamilton:** I went to school there about two miles from where I was born at a two-room school. I come from one of those two-room schools, you could start the first grade with one teacher and you could end up there five years later in the same building with the same teacher. I do remember one of the special teachers there, her name was Ms. Gassaway, she played a very important role in my life. I use her as a pivotal point to bring up some of the things about my dad. Daddy worked, I went to school, and if there was something that we needed at school Ms. Gassaway would say you all need to bring this, or bring 25 cents to pay for something, and daddy would always say you tell Ms. Gassaway to get you what you need and I'll make sure she gets paid. So, that's the way it went for many years. I guess I kind of came along with that little bit of teaching or something I learned there, that his work was his bond. Over the years, and it isn't that I tried to pattern myself in that manner, but I kind of walked that same trail, you know. If I told you something you got it.



**DePerro:** And the days before paper, your word was your contract, a handshake.

**Hamilton:** Yeah, and that's the way it was with daddy. Being truthful, and at 94 now, I can look back and reflect upon his life and the people that I meet who will talk about him, and they will tell you those sorts of things, and I'm very impressed by that. I'm very glad that I came up with that, being able to follow somebody along that trail. I'm pretty proud of him, and pretty proud that lots of things I told people, I'd do it now. Every now and then, particularly in the military, I was always a great one to want to offer more than I thought I could do. It wasn't not anything I could do it, but if you had a need for it and I was in charge of the organization or something like that, we'll do everything we can to get it for you. And if you don't get it then you need to talk to me. So it went along like that. Later on I would tell people now look, I'll promise you the world and I'll try my very best to get it to you, but if I come up short just understand that I just overextended myself, but it was never a problem. I got along fine, and I don't think I shortchanged anybody as we went through life. From that two-room school I later went to a high school in Norris, South Carolina, and that was a part of the bussing deal. Well, again at that point from my perspective, the high school was in Norris, I got on the bus, I rode the bus to Norris, we went to school, we came back, wasn't the biggest deal in the world. Reflecting back it you know, there are some inequalities there, and the system has changed now for the better. Sometimes not for the better, but it's better the way it is now, but it didn't bother me then.

**DePerro:** Was it an all black school?

**Hamilton:** It was an all black school, the grade school with the two rooms was all black, the high school was all black, and you simply went for an education, you didn't look out to see if somebody was getting something more than you were getting. It wasn't a thought, you know? You just got what you got.

**DePerro:** I think in those days in a lot of the south nobody had anything.

**Hamilton:** Nobody had much of anything, right. So, it wasn't a big deal. I finally ended up graduating from high school in Gaffney, South Carolina, that's in the upstate part of South Carolina.

**DePerro:** Did you play any sports or anything?

**Hamilton:** I played basketball in high school, and we had an opportunity to play a couple of different schools nearby, but no real athletic program. They were just something else to do.

**DePerro:** Almost like clubs?

**Hamilton:** Yeah. There wasn't any great organization to it, there was no great push to it. It was something that we did. I think we started off playing basketball and softball and baseball at recess, then it moved into a little bit of competition between the schools. One thing that happened before high school because it's a point that significantly impacted the direction I went a little bit later on, when I was going to that two-room school I joined the boy scouts way back, so a part of the old boy scout thing is under my armpits and rubbed all over me, too. And, I'm pretty proud of that. I think every kid that comes up, every young boy that comes up needs to be a part of the boy scouts.

**DePerro:** How long did you spend in the scouts?

**Hamilton:** Probably five or six years in South Carolina. One of the things that happened was we got an invitation, somehow the scout master arranged for us to go to an Air Force Base outside of Columbia, I don't remember the name of it now. I believe it was Shaw Air Force Base, somewhere in South Carolina. They gave us a ride in a rickety, old C47, and this thing is not pressurized at all because you could look and see some of the where the rivets were missing, you could see out. You could look through the skin of it and see outside, but I remember they put parachutes on us, and had the airplane gone down, and had we had to jump out we would have all been killed. I didn't think about that then, but I really would like to remark about the parachute because they were for adults and we were 10-year-old kids. They didn't fit at all. They hung them on us and the thing hit you in the back of the leg and you got it and strapped down on it and sat on it strapped in. I know that had we all jumped out the parents would have gone one way and all the kids and scouts would go the other way. But, that carried in the back of my mind that flying is good stuff. The spark was there. Later on I think this will lead me into wanting to fly, and finally starting off, just starting ended up being an Army aviator, and seeing the culmination of that dream.

**DePerro:** I had the exact same story, I went to Youngstown, in fact they still have a big reserve unit at Youngstown Municipal Airport, when I was in scouts I went out to the



airport and I did an aviation badge type thing, and that's what got me interested in flying, and that's how I ended up in the Army flying, too.

**Hamilton:** From high school, not much in guidance counseling in 1953. Class of '53. You graduated, you got your diploma, what you do was up to you. Of course, we hadn't put any money away for college, so if you graduate that's good. Some friends of mine, we'd gone up to Atlantic City, I think the summer before. In Atlantic City, you could go in there with no skills and be a dishwasher, you could push those carts on the boardwalk, I did that, summer jobs, at the beach. I remember being a dishwasher up there, I was an elevator operator, and I would push those carts, and upon graduation some of guys said let's go to Atlantic City and we'll get some jobs and go from there. I'm thinking, we already did that before, there's got to be something beyond that. Well, there's no jobs around here so, okay. We all piled in one of the guy's car, James Lockert, God bless his soul, he died about four months ago I think, but James had a car, a Studebaker, that James couldn't drive, so I had a license, Fredrick Davis had a license, another school chum, Fredrick died also, so he's dead now. We drove up to Atlantic City, a great ride up there and we got our dishwashing job, we pushed the carts. After about two months of that I'm thinking this doesn't appear it's going to lead anywhere. I don't know if I want to do this for the rest of my life, you know?

**DePerro:** When summer ends the jobs go away.

**Hamilton:** Yeah, and it gets cold up there. Well, I told one of the guys if this is all we're going to do I don't want to do this any longer. I think it was maybe about the 1<sup>st</sup> of August I came back to South Carolina and joined the Army, went to basic training at Fort Jackson, South Carolina, and that was 1953, right at the end of the Korean War. I didn't know I was signing up during war time, I was just joining the Army. I guess the good Lord has looked out for me all along, He said this guy is kind of dumb, so let him, but we won't let him get hurt. That's another story, too, that we'll go to. But, joined the Army and went to basic training down there, and we were a part of the, if not the first, few integrated basic training companies.

**DePerro:** Eisenhower was doing that, he was president then, and Eisenhower was the one who...

**Hamilton:** Truman started it. But, in '53 I don't remember who was president then, but anyway the ball was in the air and the Army was integrating at that time in basic training. I can't remember any incidents we had at basic training at all. We were all there kind of dumb, naked, and had our hair cut off, and everybody was a dumb chicken, you know? And, all those dumb chickens are just dumb chickens. I don't remember any incidents at all. They guys that were there all got along together, we all got through basic and helped each other on the way out the door, and it was off and away we went. With basic training in August and September in South Carolina, it was warm.

**DePerro:** That was August and September of 1953?

**Hamilton:** Of 1953. They sent me to Fort Lee to supply school. At some point somebody said Hamilton, you've got some good scores, so we're going to send you off to supply school, you've got aptitude for that. Went up to Fort Lee and went through supply school, and just prior to graduation the platoon sergeant called out some names:

Hamilton, Jones, Smith, whoever it was, okay all you guys get in line over there. What's going on Sarge? Just get over there, we're going to give you guys two weeks leave.

Okay. Well, after awhile you learn in the Army, when the Army starts giving you something, get nervous because there's a string tied to it. So, we got in line, and said okay, what's going on? Well, you guys are going to go on two weeks leave. What for? Well, when you come back after leave you're going to go to leadership school. Oh, no, not me. This other kid was a white guy, I don't remember his name, we said we don't want to do this, no, we don't want to do this, we don't want to go on leave. Get in the line anyway because you're going to leadership school whether you go on leave or not. Okay, I'll take the leave. He and I had that in our mind, we did not want to go to leadership school, but we took the leave and signed up. I guess we were in there about two weeks, I think it was a four week leadership school, this is for new guys right out of basic. We were in the dayroom one day and looked up and there was a sign up there with a parachute, you know, go airborne, sign up. So, we went to the orderly room and said we want to go airborne. No problem, sign up right here. So, at some point they gave us a PT test, hey, we're going to get out of here. Two days prior to graduation, they graduated us early and gave us, I'm trying to think, I was about to say an airplane ticket, but I don't think it was. I think we took the train, I think we took the train to Clarksville, Tennessee,



and showed up there for airborne training. This is two days from graduation. We did all this to get out of this leadership school, we didn't get out of anything. I digress back to another point, in basic training, I think it was in part of my school, Hamilton, you've got good grades, you've got scores and you need to apply for OCS. Wrong answer, remember that leadership? No, no, no, I don't want any of that stuff. You want me to go to OCS? No. I'm not even sure what that is, but no, I don't want to do that either. Well, that was in 1953, in 1965 I probably went off to OCS, couldn't get away from them. It's kind of like God and Jonah. No, I've got you, I've chosen you to go do something and I want you to go to (?). He and I went out to Fort Campbell and arrived out there, I think it must have been in about February or March of 1954 at Fort Campbell for jump school, and General Smith, I can't think of his first name other than General, but he had the 11<sup>th</sup> Airborne Division, and General Smith had a payday parade every payday, and every payday everybody in the 11<sup>th</sup> Airborne, not the 101<sup>st</sup>, not the 82<sup>nd</sup>, this was way back. I talk about the 11<sup>th</sup> Airborne now and everybody says 11<sup>th</sup> Airborne, never heard of that, are you sure? Yeah, I'm sure, I was there. I arrived there, it must have been about two days before payday, he had whatever field equipment they had, a field jacket and a cap, you know, whatever they got give it because everybody goes. Off to the parade field. His name is coming up, General Smith. I talked to a lot of guys and they remember about it and they remember. Yep, they remember those payday parades, yep, they remember those 25 mile road marches, yep, they remember that from General Smith. And, I remember that first one, it was huffing out to the parade field, ran that stuff out, and standing there in the cold waiting for the general to come by, every damn tent that was pitched out there, I mean we must have been out there for a couple of hours or more, while he went by just looking. We laid out, we set up the pup tents out there and stood there in the cold waiting for the general to come by and inspect the troops. The 11<sup>th</sup> Airborne were pretty much gung-ho then, we were soldiers, and when we weren't doing that, got through jump school and it was running with rifle PT out to the imodo DZ I think Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays. As a young PFC back then I remember some of the very painful Monday mornings because back then the Army worked till noon on Saturday, and if you didn't mess up too much you could be off Saturday night. You had to go and get a pass, you just didn't get off and walk off and get in the car and go

somewhere. No, no, no, you had to have a pass, and I remember some of those painful Monday mornings because we'd catch a bus and go to Nashville, first we'd go to Clarksville, then go to Nashville to the big city and walk around there Saturday night drinking beer and liquor or something, you know. Then get back Sunday night late, riding that last bus in, well, I can tell you what happened on Monday morning, it was reveille, I think at 6 o'clock, and you needed to be there for reveille. Right after reveille was PT, and rifle PT meant calisthenics with the rifle, with the M1 then. Later it went back to the M14. I don't remember what it weighed, but it was enough to tire your lungs out.

**DePerro:** About eight and a half pounds.

**Hamilton:** I remember one day, and look, and while you're out there doing that you can tell they guy that stayed out too long because it didn't take long for them to just get sick as a dog because that rifle PT would take the starch out of you. If you had a halfway upset stomach from too much drinking, you were in trouble. I remember one day in particular we had double time out to the imodo DZ and turn around, it was a Monday morning, turn around coming back, and I can't remember the kid in front of me, his name may have been Howell, I don't remember his name, but he was having problems. He had drank too much, stayed out too long, and it was overtaking him. At one point, (?) he fell to his knees, fell flat on his face, because that's how you fell out. You didn't do this thing of flashing a badge, hey Sarge, I don't feel good today. No, I'm sorry, if you fell out, you fell out. You better be on your hands and knees and that wasn't the end of it because when he fell out on his knees, flopped forward on his face and down on his weapon, and good old Jesse's running right behind him, and I stopped and reached and got him by the back of his shirt, hey man, come on, you can get up. At about that time a bony fist hit me in the back between my shoulder blades, and George Nabinger, was the first sergeant of the K Company of the 503<sup>rd</sup> in 1954 or '55, somewhere in there. He was very tall, think, skinny, talked with his mouth closed with his teeth clenched, and he says Hamilton, what in the God damn hell are you doing? He grabbed me, smacked me back on my feet, get back in the God damn formation. I think this kid's name was Howell, Howell, get on your God damn feet, and when you get back to company area I want you in the God damn mess hall, I mean that was it. If you fell out there was no meat wagon



to come, nobody was going to be nice to you and pat your face and give you some water. Hell no. You were going to get punished just because you fell out, if you made it back, and you better make it back. So, those were my remembrances of my airborne days.

**DePerro:** Of course that first sergeant was a Korean War and WWII veteran.

**Hamilton:** Yes, George Nabinger, and I saw him again at Fort Bragg in the 82<sup>nd</sup>, still tall, thin, guy, he was a great guy, I respect him, a wonderful first sergeant. While I was in the 11<sup>th</sup> I had my opportunity to see some other part of the world. We flew in some C119s, the two double booms, and as I understand it, the hearsay is the damn thing was never supposed to fly.

**DePerro:** The flying boxcars.

**Hamilton:** The flying boxcars, but it flew, and we flew in the 119s all the way to Alaska. It was a murderous ride on those canvas seats, you know, where that metal (?) there. We got to Canada, there was some pass called White Horse or something like that, that the 119s loaded, with the weather, couldn't get over the pass, so we had to land at Fort Nelson at Edmonton, Canada, and spend a couple of days there while the weather cleared so that we could finally get there. That was a little bit of fun, we got stranded there in this small place there, something different. Got to Alaska and I got an opportunity to be a sled dog. I don't know if you watched any of the Army pictures what they call Okios, it's like a slab that you just put bunches of stuff in and you put three or four guys up front and one guy behind and everybody goes trotting through the woods. If you happen to be the guy on the back you've got to hold that damn Okio when those other guys are going downhill, it goes over the hill it's your job to hold it and lots of times that didn't work because the sled with too much weight and one guy back there and then come the Okio and run over the guys. Everything we did, we either did it the hard way or the fast way and ended up having to redo it, but that was the airborne, and it was good training, and I loved it. When General Smith came through in 1955 and said the division's going to rotate gyro, you may recall that word back in the 50s, gyro, and one division would move somewhere to replace another one. So, the 11<sup>th</sup> Airborne was going to gyro to Germany and replace somebody over there, and General Smith, this was a person guy, I'm telling you. You remember how I told you how he walked that damn parade field, he went through everyone of the units in the 11<sup>th</sup> Airborne, everybody was in there in the mess

hall, lined up sitting up there, you know, and you went before the general and told him are you going to go to Germany with the division? If it was yes, sir, I don't think I'm exaggerating, if you had PFC stripes on you could come out being promoted to a corporal that day, an acting E5 and come out of there with E5 stripes on, that's the way it was because he was putting the organization together. But, the answer was no was they cut out on you and you were gone. I ended up in the, it was a circle patch, I think we might have been 3<sup>rd</sup> Army at (?).

**DePerro:** With the A?

**Hamilton:** Yeah, I think it was.

**DePerro:** Yeah, 3<sup>rd</sup> Army, It was a blue patch with the red A.

**Hamilton:** Yeah. They booted us all out of there, and we were down with the legs, and a lot of guys didn't like that. I don't know, somebody must have complained to a senator somewhere and they said, you know, the 82<sup>nd</sup> is short these troopers and you've got them all down at 3<sup>rd</sup> Army so get them all out of there and send them to the, so we all got the opportunity to go back on jump status. Within a couple of months I was in the 82<sup>nd</sup>.

**DePerro:** So, you weren't going to Germany?

**Hamilton:** No. I said no because, first off a kind of little country boy from the back woods back there, you know, I didn't know where I was going and I wasn't excited about something I didn't know a whole lot about until I figured it out, and I can tell you in those days when the airborne will go somewhere to do something there was always trouble. If we went to go somewhere for a demonstration jump they would put us out in some GP tents outside of the town of where it was, people would sneak in town, the cops would get them, the MPs would get them. It was always trouble, it was just, it was a great outfit but there was always something, there was always a degree of trouble because I guess it's just the group of people that you've got there that jump out of airplanes, there's several of them in there that's a little bit warped enough they will just try anything. Too much energy, and I think that was it. I was a little bit reluctant to go way off somewhere with a whole bunch like that so I decided no, I wouldn't go, so I ended up in 3<sup>rd</sup> Army, but ended up at Fort Bragg. But, it bright when I got there in the 325 Airborne Battle Group I think it was.

**DePerro:** You were in an Infantry outfit? Your MOS was supply?



**Hamilton:** I was a supply MOS, I don't remember the number.

**DePerro:** What kind of company were you assigned to?

**Hamilton:** I was in a line company.

**DePerro:** In an infantry company?

**Hamilton:** I was in a line company at Fort Campbell in the supply room.

**DePerro:** In K Company?

**Hamilton:** When I got to Bragg in the 82<sup>nd</sup> I was a supply clerk in the S4, still a supply clerk in the battalion, 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion, and it was a good tour there, but two things came out also, always running double time to get something done, it becomes a part of you.

Anytime the airborne went anywhere there was always some minor skirmishes in trouble. We'd go down to Fort Benning, I remember we went to Fort Benning for a demonstration jump down there and they had put us in some billets down near the airfield and the guys were restricted, they can't go on main post, that's the wrong answer because pretty soon everybody was on main post, and pretty soon the MPs were out there with the flashing lights and herding all of the jumpers from Bragg back down near Lawson Airfield. It was like demonstrators and we're all herding around there and the MP car was down there with the blinking lights and sirens and the MPs along the street here, alright, you guys back to your area, back to your area. I think there was a club down at Lawson Army Airfield that they weren't doing anything. Nobody was, I don't think anybody was doing much, but when word got down there that the provost marshal and the MPs were mistreating the troops up on the main post, well they got into an uproar, and all hell broke loose then. The next morning they weren't going to let us, you're not going to fly out, we're not getting out of here till we get all the damage paid for and all that. I guess after about a couple of hours they said okay, everybody get your gear, get on the cattle cars, get to the airplane, and the C119s back to Fort Bragg. It was always some stuff like that. That was the way it was. I married my wife there while I was at Bragg. I used to hitchhike from Fort Bragg to Newport News, Virginia, she was up here living with her sister. This was when the military was and civilians, it was kind of a different situation then, a soldier could get out in uniform and do this and you'd be picked up and get a ride, black or white, it didn't make any difference. Somebody would give you a ride and they

were glad to give you a ride it was good stuff. Every weekend at 12 o'clock I was out there and caught the bus or ride down to seems like it was 301.

**DePerro:** Yeah, no interstates yet.

**Hamilton:** No interstates then, and hitchhike up to Emporia then down 58, spend the night then hitchhike back the next day.

**DePerro:** So you met her at Bragg?

**Hamilton:** No, she was my high school sweetheart from Gaffney, but when I left and went in the Army she came up here, then actually visited her up here, and when she was in South Carolina, her home, I ended up buying a motorcycle and I'd ride that motorcycle from Fort Bragg to Blacksburg, South Carolina, where she was. Saturday afternoon, I watch it now, Saturday afternoon, work till noon, ride that motorcycle down there and hoot around all night, not get much sleep, then Sunday night ride that motorcycle back to Bragg. Well, almost lost it one Sunday night because I was coming up near Rockingham, you get a little bit dozey on there and at some point my hand hit the switch and the light went off and I didn't think, opps, no lights. Well, I'll go across the road to this service station over here, well the service station was over there but there was a gully between me and the service station. The road slopped off and me and the motorcycle down the hill. When it got down the hill it stopped I fell off, it fell on me. Luckily some people at the service saw what happened, they came down, got it off me, helped me push it up the hill, kick started it, it started, thanks, on the way to Fort Bragg. I can remember many a weekend, Sunday night, stopping that thing in a town called Carthage and shutting it down because I was cold, and I'd shut it down and sit down by the motor for awhile and doze a little bit and get warm a little bit, then get on it and head on back to Bragg. And, Nabinger did not like soldiers with motorcycles. I had one, I can't remember the other guy who had one, but he was more of a wild eyed dude that would just get, he was one of the guys that would get in stuff. I just rode, it was just transportation somewhere.

**DePerro:** Who was Nabinger?

**Hamilton:** He was the first sergeant from the 11<sup>th</sup> Airborne.

**DePerro:** He was now at Bragg.

**Hamilton:** He was not at Bragg, me and George again. Lost one of my friends then, one of the guys in the company because Hooper had a 1951 Ford convertible, but he liked to



ride the motorcycles, and one weekend, Hooper, it was a long weekend, those were strange, wanted to borrow the motorcycle, you take my car I'm going to ride your motorcycle to Nashville, Tennessee, for the weekend and come back. Okay, give me the keys to the car, you've got it, and away Hooper went. It had the tailpipe on both sides called Chattanooga Stacks and it was a good looking bike. My wife used to ride on it with me. There were several times we almost got killed on it because when you ride a motorcycle and the guy up front leans into the curve if you're on the back you need to lean into it, too. Well, a lot of women don't figure that out, whoa, I don't want to lean in that, well you're trying to get it down and she's trying to make it stand up and sometimes you can barely stay on the pavement so we had a couple of things like that but we got through it. She and I never fell on it, but Hooper took it to Nashville that weekend, and I guess it must have been about 3 o'clock Monday morning and the CQ's knocking on the door, Hamilton, Hamilton, Hamilton, the first sergeant wants you. Well, if the first sergeant wants you at 3 o'clock Monday morning something's wrong, you're in trouble, something's wrong. Got my clothes on real quick, ran in, first sergeant, Hamilton, George talked through his teeth, now, God damn I hope you're satisfied now. What, what? God damn Hooper's killed himself on that motorcycle of yours. Oh, God, I'm sorry. Don't be sorry, Hooper's the one that's dead, don't you never buy another God damn motorcycle here. (?) It was unfortunate, but back in those days, I suppose it's the same thing now, when a soldier gets off on the weekend they hightail it as far as they can as fast as they can and stay as long as they can, and as I understand the police report Hooper was coming back and apparently fell asleep on the motorcycle, ran off the road into an abutment and killed himself.

**DePerro:** Nobody was wearing helmets in those days.

**Hamilton:** No, didn't wear a helmet, in fact you wore these soft caps with that little shiny bib on it, and I put some bit earrings in mine, it was kind of a wild stuff to do if you're going to ride motorcycles. Well, like you're saying, no helmets, no nothing like that, and if people tell you that you can not fall asleep on a motorcycle, don't believe them because you can. You can just sit there droning, and if your tired and your cold you can doze off, and that's why I used to stop at Carthage because you could just go to sleep on it and kill yourself. Well, I had Hooper's car and it burned oil because soldiers wear

cars out, they did back then, and I didn't want it anyway, and I traded it to another guy for an Indian motorcycle with the gear shift on the other side, but I was getting out then and I left it there with somebody because I was married, had a wife and a son, a motorcycle isn't the transportation that you want.

**DePerro:** Where were you at when you got married?

**Hamilton:** We got married in one of those weekends when I'd go to South Carolina to visit her, one weekend I didn't go, and when I showed up the next weekend her stepfather says oh, man, you're in trouble. I don't know, what's the problem? You all were supposed to get married last weekend. We were? Yeah, she's mad as hell. And I'm thinking I don't know when she asked me or when I said yes, but at some point I think one weekend I got down there and we got married. I was still in the service then. Like I said with a wife and a son a motorcycle ain't the transportation you need. When my tour was up I got out and came up to Newport News up here. I remember an old sergeant telling me, boy, you better stay in this Army, you ain't got no skill, you can't do nothing out there. But, I'm out of here top. Well, how many young soldiers that's going to get out can you talk into staying in? I got out and came out and proved that he was right. I tell people the Army had taught me how to jump out of an airplane and shoot a gun, and there's no great demand for either one of those skills in civilian life. You shoot a gun, they lock you up, you jump out of airplanes they think you're crazy, so not much to offer. I went through the thing of going to the Virginia Employment office, and what you do is you go in and sign up and you stand around and see if somebody wants somebody to do something. This is not good, a very uneasy feeling. Then one day they said okay, need some laborers to go and work on a site, Hamilton, okay, great, I got me a job. Get on the truck, went and got on the truck and rode out to some site where they were laying pipe. Okay, get a shovel, we'll have you guys fill in the hole. Okay, hum, I came out of airborne, get the shovel, fill in the hole. One of the guys said hey man. What's up? You're working too fast, you're working too hard, just put a little bit of dirt in the shovel and throw it in the hole. See what that guy's doing? Just do it like that. We don't want to finish this up here too quick, if we do we'll have to do something else. Well, that didn't ring quite well, but, okay. Alright, we got the hole filled up. Move those boards down to this other place down here. So, what do you do in the airborne? You go get a



whole arm full of God damn boards, you know, get it done, get it done, so off I went. The guy touched me again, he said you're carrying too many boards, man. Okay.

**DePerro:** Different culture.

**Hamilton:** Yeah, different culture. So, the next day I said I'm not coming tomorrow. For that day's work I did, I don't know what they did with the money, but I can't handle that. It's like having a dog tied and trying to do something, it didn't work. I couldn't deal with that. I think the wife might have been pregnant again, and she went home to have the baby and I stayed up here. I went by the employment officer one more day and said, before that though, I got a job at People's Drug Store down in Newport News as a porter. A porter cuts boxes open, brings the boxes up and sets them up for the sales girl to put up there, and the porter also sweeps the floors, mops the floors and takes up chewing gum off the floor. I think the most demoralizing thing about that was getting down with a razor blade and getting chewing gum off the floor. That was about as degrading as the other job was where the people didn't want to work. But, I worked there through the winter, it was that next year when the wife was pregnant. During that Christmas, I remember the only thing I could afford to buy my wife was two small lamps for about, I don't know, they might have been about \$2.50 a piece for Christmas, and we'd gotten something for the baby, but I remember that year I thought about that and Edgar Allan Poe, did Poe write The Raven, and said Nevermore? I said we won't do this again. When she went home to have the baby I told the manager, his name was Mr. Musgrove, he was a great guy, I said Mr. Musgrove, I've got to go because I've got to do something a little bit more for my family. Oh, Jesse, we hate to see you leave because you're one of the best porters we've ever had here. I came out of the airborne, remember, and I worked, but I didn't like cutting that chewing gun off the floor, and it was a go-nowhere job. So, I had to leave anyway, and I regret it leaving the nice people there, but you've got to go on. So, I left there and went by the employment office for about two days and decided if I don't get something that's going work here I'm out of here. One day I went in and my brother-in-law told me to join the reserves which I did, he also said get your chauffeur's license, which I did. I think the chauffeur's license I paid two bucks for it, I got the chauffeur's license. When I went in that day they went who's got a chauffeur's license? I guess about 15 guys raised up their hands. Which one of you guys

can drive a semi? Aw. 14 of them turned around and went back, I stood there. I'm 21 years old. He says you drive a semi? I said yeah. He said alright, you look awful young. I said I don't know what age has got to do with it. I can drive it. Alright, he wrote me out a card, report up the peninsula block, it's right down, it used to be a traffic circle in Newmarket. Benson Philips was down there, I don't know who's down there now. I walked in and the foreman there was a guy named George, George smoked a pipe and had a bad eye, one real good one and one bad one. I came in there and walked in the office that said operations and George looked at me and said what do you want? I'm not sure if George had some Italian in him or something, I don't remember but, what do you want? Nothing, I'm your new driver. You're too young to drive a semi, can you drive? Yeah. When did you learn to drive a semi? I said in the Army. That was not totally true. But, I remembered, and for those who can remember, backing up a jeep with a trailer is the most difficult backing you can do. I mean, if you've got something long behind you, you can see where it's going. That damn jeep trailer will turn on you, and you're in and out, in and out, so the supply clerk, I'd tell her let me have the jeep back in the supply room, load up the stuff, and off we'd go. That's how I learned how to back, maneuver my vehicle with a trailer. And we had a supply truck with a trailer on the back of it. That would have been a little more difficult because you had keep it in the mirrors to see it, but you could back that too, and I'm thinking this other damn thing can't be any more difficult. So, George said you look too young. Where did you do this? My Army deal again. All right. Here, sign him up, put him on the payroll. Well, you don't have to drive right now, I want you to ride with the short trucks, these guys (?) run the area then you can take it out when we need it. Okay. And while I was riding with the other guys I looked over the yard to see what this was. I was an old GMC with a long flatbed on it, okay, it's a truck. I went over on a couple of occasions and jumped up on the running board to look inside of it to see what it looked like, well, the gears were marked on it, and there was a little clip on the side of it and that put it into a lower drive lane, so not that difficult. Had a great big fat guy that was a driver and he was leaving, that's why they needed another one. I never did ride with him, but one day he had pulled it up and loading it and I jumped up on the running board and, you're the new driver? Yeah. You look too young to drive this truck. I said okay. Where did you learn to drive this? In the



Army, the Army teaches you a lot of stuff. One thing I could not identify in there, it was a lever on the steering column here where the gear shift levers are now, and I said what's that? He said that's a trailer break, I thought you said you knew how to drive. I said I do but in the Army their down between the seats. I don't know if there are any. I knew what it was. Well, I guess after about a month they said, George came out with his pipe and said Jesse, here, get your truck. Now is my day. Well, you normally came into the yard and you drove all the way around. The trucks were parked over here but you had to drive around the belt and around the organization here and drive into the area where the lift trucks would load the box on. Or you could pull up here and back it this way. If you could pull up here and back in that was a sign that you were a good driver. Hell, might as well do it the hard way. That's the way the airborne does it anyway, we don't look for the easy way, just do it the hard way, or whatever way we do it was the hard way. I got in the truck started it up, put the brake on, drug the wheels, I know how that works now, if you push up to here the brakes lock, if you pull it down here the brakes (?) okay, got it. I pull it out and slowly backed it in there and just looking where the damn trailer is, all you got to do is see where the trailer's going, you know. Backed it in, loaded it up, and I became very good with it. I could take that long truck out with six pallets of blocks onto a site, unload them, and get back there at the same time the guys in the short trucks could take out (?) The trailer had ten, five on each side and the short trucks took six, three on each side. I could get out unload and get back the same as those other guys, of course they wouldn't work as hard, they were taking more breaks. I remember that old airborne mentality, just get the damn job done. So, I'd go out, and I think I built up the leadership there had great confidence in me because I wouldn't cheat on the work. I would work, I 'd come in there when it was cold and snowing and Bill would say we're not going to deliver any blocks today, all you guys go home. Hamilton, come over here with me. And, he'd take me over and said okay, go take that, it was a (?) motor with a bucket on it and go to Newmarket. They want us to clean the parking lot over there, go do it. So, he would give me things to do throughout the winter when (?) go do something. Again, I guess it was that I worked hard at it, and they were confident in what I was doing, so they helped me along. I can't complain it at all. I started trying to fly then, remember the flying way back? See, even that job, in the summer you work your butt off hauling

blocks all over the place and in the winter the pay was very meager because there wasn't much to do, and after a couple of years of that you can tell that's going nowhere, so I need to do something. So in 1959 I went to the Peninsula Airport over here before all of the (?) stuff over there, and walked in the door of the operations and the guy looked at me and said can I help you? I said I got a GI bill, I want to fly. He said come on in. If I'm not mistaken, if I wasn't one of the first, I was one of the few blacks that learned to fly over here. In 1958 over here at Newport News, and I had a guy named Handy was my instructor, great guy, showed me how to fly, and an old guy named Colby who was the manager-owner and he later passed, but both were great guys. That's how I started flying, on the GI bill with the objective of getting a commercial license. Well, back in those days if you were going to be black, flying, and going for a commercial license, not much of a chance, but, they signed me up and I went through. One of my friends in the reserves, remember I signed up for the reserve, he said Jesse, I hear you're flying, your going to flight school. I said yeah. Why don't you go to flight school in the Army? The Army will do it for you. I'm thinking, how do I do it? He says you just volunteer to go back on Active Duty, do it. Well, I came back on Active Duty in 1959, and tried to sign up for flight school. Well, the school is closed, got enough this year. Let me go back, when I signed up to go in, the first thing when I got back I want to go to the 82<sup>nd</sup>, and they said what you've got to do is you've got to wait until your unit assignment then volunteer to go airborne. Jeez, all the way to Fort Hood, Texas. Every headquarters, I'm airborne, I want to go back to the airborne. Yeah, right, okay. Well, what happened is TAGO cut orders sending you somewhere and that's where you were going, never mind what you want. Well, I got down to a howitzer battery, went in and told the first sergeant, top, I really don't want to be here, I want to go back to the airborne. Alright, I understand, we're getting ready for IG inspection, and you help us get through this and I'll get you out of here. I could type, I could read the regulations, so hey, we got it together, we got through. After a couple of months I said okay, we did great, top. I want to get out of here. He said alright, you've got to wait a little bit, wait till things settle down, okay, this is smoke. I've been in the Army, I came in yesterday, you know? So, I did the papers, I know what the regulations are, I put in the 1049, I think it was then, way back then, and signed it and gave it to the first sergeant, he tore the damn thing up. Come



on. I did one more and put it in the company commander's box and the first sergeant got it out. I was in enlisted reserve then, ER, and went to the post reenlistment and they said, yeah, you can get out of here, the airborne needs fools every day. Just sign right here, top, I'm out of here, I'm sorry, I've got to go. You son of a gun, gone, back to Bragg, back to the 325. It must have been a couple, two or three months in Texas. Killeen, Texas, was not much of a place you'd want to take your family to. I got back to Bragg and put in for flight school. No, we've got all the quotas we need for this year. That was '61, '62 I finally called up DA and said I put in for flight school a year ago, and if I'm not going you guys just tell me because after three years on station, you're ready to get out of there. I said I intend to go Special Forces, I already looked into it. And, the guy says what's your last name? This your first name? This your serial number? He read it back, he says don't go anywhere, don't do anything, we'll send you orders to flight school. Wow! Critical point, critical changing point. The wife, we were living on base at Fort Bragg, so I think we must have had at that time at least three kids then, but that was great. No, we had five then, five kids, and I got orders for flight school in Mineral Wells, Texas. I packed the wife up and took her to Charlotte, got an apartment, and I must have caught a bus to Texas and got there. I'm not sure when you went to flight school, but when you go to flight school as an enlisted person, go through the warrant program, that is a joy, that everybody needs to stand and look at. I went in there in the orderly room and I'm Spec 5 Hamilton and I've got orders here, yeah, come on in, sign right there, okay, see that building with the lights on, this is Sunday at about 7 o'clock at night, you know, you've got to be there before Monday morning. And, the lights are on, see that one up there, yeah, report right up there. So, I signed, I got my bag and go up there you know, and as soon as you get within earshot you hear all this noise and raising hell, and people running out of buildings and you're wondering what in the hell's going on? Is this it? Came in and I walked up, what's your name? Hamilton. Put that bag down, you're out of uniform, get those stripes off, wait a minute, no, no, you don't wait a minute, get those stripes off, get up there, take that bag, on the double. Damn duffel bag, run up the stairs.

**DePerro:** Worse than the airborne.

**Hamilton:** Yeah. Here you go, that's your bed over there, put your bag down there, get those clothes, get changed into the fatigues. I remember there was one guy there, this

was a thing I remember from that first night, there was one guy, I don't remember his name, but he was a black E6, and he said just wait a God damn minute, I'm an E6 in the God damn United States Army, and I don't have to put up with this shit. The tack officer says, no, you don't have to put up with it, if you don't want to put up with it you get your ass down to the orderly room, and that guy left not knowing that this is what this drill was all about. If you don't really want to be here, we don't want you here and you're gone. Well, that's just a way to look at things, and he missed the opportunity of doing a lot of great things. Well, I got through preflight at Mineral Wells at Camp (?) then we flew the preflight was, I think it was a month of just hell raising, running back and forth talking five minutes to eat and double timing all over the place, and they weeded out some more that didn't want to do it or couldn't hack that stuff. Well, the PT, the guy says okay, today we're going to do eight repetitions of whatever it is, and there was a couple of other airborne guys with me. Eight repetitions? Whatever they want is okay, let's just do a couple more, so physically, that part of it was nothing for us. We flew the OH23 at Mineral Wells, and that was great. Getting through there was all right, but a couple of critical events happened. One day was my check ride day to move to another phase, and we had a civilian check pilot there and everybody called him the undertaker, he looked like an undertaker, and I got old digger O'Dell as the check pilot, and went out and flew around and he finally, the last part of the check ride there was a forced landing area and he cut the throttle. If you didn't make it to the forced landing area you busted it because you were dead. Well, I made damn sure I was going to make it. I hawked it back and dropped the (?) and hawked it back against the rotor RPM and then dropped the rover and building up air speed, speed, speed, speed, till I know we got it. Well, I hauled back on it and we came in over the trees, leveled it and pulled it and we came in there like a bullet. Old digger O'Dell, we made it, but he didn't like that, failed my damn check ride. Holy smoke, if you don't think that will take the starch out of you, we had another next week, I had a whole weekend to play with, to wrestle in your mind, oh, man. I'm going to fail this. All weekend I sat in the billets not the whole weekend but I spent several hours there, back on the (?), down on the clutch, whatever pedaling, I did that stuff and the next week I got a military check pilot and we went out and got through this thing. I didn't slide all the way out of the area this time, but he said you're good to go, and got past that.



When I past that check ride, everybody was thinking when digger O'Dell failed me, oh God, if Jesse failed it, we're all in trouble because I was pretty good. I had had a little bit of flying experience so it wasn't like I was nervous or anything, but he failed me and we were all like this. That day, I don't remember how far it is from the Statesville back to the main heliport, but I literally hugged that helicopter, kissed that bubble and double time, and I said when I pass it I'm double timing back to the main station heliport, I did. Down that dusty road out there in Texas out there by the pond when you pass your check ride you've got to (?) double time pass that back there and I was just elated because I had made it past there. I finally graduated from there and went to Fort Rucker, I guess another critical point there. A wife with five children in Charlotte. I want her out there with me. You want your wife and your kids with you. Girlfriend had just gotten her license when we were at Bragg, and I swore she couldn't drive. I don't know if you ever tried to teach your wife to drive, you really need to let somebody else do it because they just can't learn. I came home one day at Bragg and she said look what I've got, it was her license. Oh, God. Anyway, she took the car, we had I think it was a '61 Ford Fairlane four door with five kids. There may have been a dog, at least one dog, and maybe a cat because we always had dogs and cats. With a U-Haul trailer that she couldn't pack up and she couldn't read a map, still can't read a map, drove from Charlotte, North Carolina, to Mineral Wells, Texas, and I said call every night so I know where you are. You need to hear her story. Some guy from Charlotte, one of her neighbor's friend drove with her and the kids down to Atlanta, he gets out and she's headed west now, I forget what road, stopped a couple of white soldiers hitchhiking, Remember what I said pick up soldiers, back in those days it was a safe world. She stopped and said well, I've got a car full of kids, I'm going to Texas, and they were going somewhere, Louisiana. They said, ma'am, well, if you'll let us ride we will go ahead and drive for you, get you some rest because you've got a long way to go. They got in the car and they drove, my wife said one of the kids threw up on one of the guys. One of my sons, Jimmy, he gets car sick. He said ma'am, that's not a problem, he wiped it off and cleaned up. They drove her to the point where they were going to have to get off and go up to Fort Polk, and gave her some money and thanked her for the ride. One night she called, when she called that night from where she was, the next night she called she was

someplace back in the other direction, and I'm thinking this can't be right. She had it confused, she was further down that way. And the only way she got there was some guy in service station said lady, look, let me show you how to get there, this is the highway here, here's a main town right here, you head for that town, when you get there head for that town, when you get there head for that town, because my wife is just, she can't do anything with a map. One day they had pulled off and she stopped to get gas and fill up, and when she pulled out to go my son said mom you're going in the wrong direction, and he was eight years old, and she says what do you mean I'm going in the wrong direction, I know which way I'm going, we're going this way. She said how do you know I'm going in the wrong direction? Because dad says in the afternoon if you're going west you're supposed to be driving into the sun and the sun's at our back. You don't know what you're talking about, so after about an hour's driving she pulls over into a service station and says I'm trying to get somewhere. Lady, you're going in the wrong direction. Back in the other direction. I guess one night about 3 o'clock I got the call, Hamilton, this was a guy that was in our class, your wife is here. What? Your wife is here. No, no, I said that my wife, Hamilton. Oh, yeah, okay. They arrived there and got them put up in quarters there and until I graduate we drove to Fort Rucker, flew the wondrous H19 at Fort Rucker, what a pig. One a hot day the instructor and one student may get off the ground, but it was part of the training, and finished up the H19, then I got checked out on the A21s, another hog, but that was my love because that was my first assignment went on to Korea. The family stayed in New London, Connecticut, (?), Connecticut, where I had stayed early as a child, with my sister, she moved up there with them and stayed a while with them while I was in Korea. I flew the A21s over there.

**DePerro:** What unit were you with there?

**Hamilton:** I was with A Company of the 15<sup>th</sup> Aviation Battalion, it was the A21 Company that had been moved under the 1<sup>st</sup> Cav. The 6<sup>th</sup> Trans and the 13<sup>th</sup> I think were separate transportation companies at one point, both A21, I think they were, but when I got there in '64 the A21s had been given to the divisions, and I wore a Cav patch. Flew the A21 and fell in love with it. I told people every time A21 must have been made for the Air Force because, it's just too God damn comfortable for the Army. You're sitting out there in these nice little seats, you know, and you could fly. When the weather was



warm you could sit there and go to sleep. I had a great tour over there, fell in love with the A21.

**DePerro:** What kind of things did you do with the 21?

**Hamilton:** Some of the exciting things we did was fly the, like it's a telephone pole, up on top of these radar sites for them to build these hawk sites.

**DePerro:** Okay, so they needed telephone poles for towers.

**Hamilton:** They needed the poles up there for the towers, sling loads, so if you can imagine now an A21 flying on top of these mountains like they'd cut the top off and putting these poles up there.

**DePerro:** Did they have the holes predrilled?

**Hamilton:** No, no, no, we drug them off the ground, you taxi up over it, just roll up over it and hook it up, you'd pick up and you'd start backing up till you get it up under you, then you go on top of the mountain. It stands up and you can take it up on top of the mountain like that, and you get up there and this is where the fun came in. An A21 is about two, or three, or four, or five thousand C, doesn't have much power up there, you've got to take this thing down very gingerly and lay it down. Well, it took both pilots then, one was on the throttle, don't over boost it, and the other one was pushing and pulling on the collected trying to keep the thing going and I can tell you that none of the gauges you could see because the (?) everything was just shaking. We got it done, and that company that I was in, I think we had a major as a company commander, we had a 1<sup>st</sup> lieutenant, I forget his name, he's a great guy, he saved my career, and I think we had one or two W2s, the rest were W1s. (?)

**DePerro:** (?) You were an old man at that point because you had a lot of enlisted time.

**Hamilton:** Yeah, but we were all W1s, wild-eyed, thought we could do anything with the A21 and we did some crazy things. Formation flying, you know. Flying formation with an A21, it was pull it up tight, pull it up tight. You're not looking, you're just watching the back end of that other one, and when it goes up you've got to go up, and here we were, and if somebody screwed up up front it was walla, walla, walla, walla, A21s all over the place. It was great. Had an engine failure over there, that was the end of my tour now, probably about two weeks going on, and I'm a senior pilot and aircraft commander then. Had some other guy left me in, we had taken some of the, I'm trying to

remember, it was the hawk battery we were visiting, but we were taking inspection teams, and when we flew in they went into a fit because it was an inspection team, and they had a certain amount of time, they had the missiles out ready to fire. So, when we came it was panic. We had flown from (?) over one the western part of Korea, a place I think it was called (?), and I remember this was a critical day another thing I remember specifically, we flew in there and we burned off fuel by the time we got there, took the troops up and dropped them off, we went down to the officer's club down there and stayed down there and had lunch and coffee and just waited around until they ran those people crazy on the site, then we'd go pick them up and go home. We picked them up and came back down and refueled. You don't go up there with a belly full of fuel and pick up all those people. Some crazy things you don't do, so I was smart enough that day, we went up, picked them up, and brought it around for refuel. Well, the other thing you weren't smart to do it is take an A21 up about 5,000 feet and flying over the mountains in Korea and flying direct, because what are you going to do if the engine quits? You're going to be in deep trouble. But, it was a nice day and the air was smooth, and let's just go home, pull it up about 5,000 feet, and let's go home, and everything worked fine until we got near (?), it was a Korean base there. Had to go land there and drop off one guy. The copilot was flying, I let him do this, we're taking out a little bit tight, and I said better let me do it. I got it up on the gear and got it light, you know, and pulled it up and honked it over and sucked up the (?) and away we went, and I guess we'd gotten about 500 feet, and the engine said Kaboom! And, the needle went wow, wow, wow. Oh, oh. What do we do now? Set the throttle back, got on the horn, man, this is not good. Not good. But as I checked the gauges, the engine was idling. Well, if you've got a belly load of people, if you can land under power, it's better to do it rather than not do it. Well, I ran the engine up again, it went kaboom, it blew a cylinder, it didn't destroy itself, but it wouldn't hold. I guess about that time we were down to about 150, 200 feet. The only thing to do then was pull the wheel back and get the landing altitude, pull snatch the flaps up on the arm, and it was like, I remember this reminds me of the stagecoach days, you just pull the reins back and stand on the brakes and we came down, kapow, on the rear gear of that A21. It'll take a good landing without plowing down into a field, I held it back here, skidded along with the brakes on, held down on the forward gear, and



then it leaned over one side and I pushed the yoke to go to the other side, it headed that way, I pulled it back and finally it settled down, wock, wock, because if it had gone over the blade would beat themselves to death and there'd be plywood and over the place. So it sat there on the gear there, and the guys in the back, they were "way, great, way, wonderful, wonderful, wonderful", they were so man, we've got a pilot that can fly a helicopter without an engine. They were ecstatic. The adrenaline was up there, so just check the gauges, write down everything because they're going to ask us all of that stuff. Never mind, what else are we going, how high, what speed, what was the oil pressure, what was this, what was that? Write all that down, okay, alright, tell the crew chief. Don't let any of the people, because the Koreans are all around here, don't anybody touch the helicopter. Then we went somewhere and made the telephone call back to the company, and the company commander says "don't move, sit still, we'll be right there", oh, sir, it's okay, just send us another airplane because we're going to complete the mission. No, you tell those people call, get a God damn bus or truck and pick them up, the mission's completed, don't you all go nowhere. I could understand his concern because we're ready to keep doing it. Well, that's how you are when the adrenaline's up there. By the time they sent another aircraft and picked us up and got us back to the bar it was, I mean when the adrenaline goes off, you're spilling your drink and that's why they don't want you flying anymore, you know? You learn that. I got through Korea and got back and that was a good tour. I went down after that, they were going to send me to Fort Bragg, orders got changed because they were filling up the 11<sup>th</sup> Air Assault, getting ready to send people to Vietnam. When I got there and went into the Chinook Company where my buddy who had come out of the 82<sup>nd</sup> was in Korea in that A21 Company, he ended up going to Fort Benning, and I'm following him. Out of the 82<sup>nd</sup>, to flight school, to Korea, and then we go to Benning, and there was Thompson, got down and he said let's get us a commission, Jesse, we can volunteer for a direct commission. I'm saying, wait a minute, you've already got your Chinook check out, let me get mine, and then we'll do it. So, I got mine and we both walked in and they said sorry, we've got enough now, and he looked at me and said you're too old anyway. If you want a commission you're going to have to OCS. Okay, hell, we'll both sign up for OCS. So we did. He ended up going to Benning, but since I had come back from Korea a couple of month after he did, they said

okay, you're not going to Vietnam if you hadn't been back six months or something like that, six or nine months. Then they sent me to Rucker. I got checked out as an IP in the Huey.

**DePerro:** Tell me about, what you did (?) you did OCS?

**Hamilton:** Not yet. I had put in for OCS. I was still a W2 then and got reassigned to Fort Rucker and got checked out as an IP in the Huey and the Chinook. The old A model, there was about three A models down there, they didn't fly much, so I flew Hueys. It was there when I was in instruments school I got a call from some major from Fort McPherson. Mr. Hamilton, yes, sir, it's major somebody at Fort McPherson, we've got orders for you to go to Fort Benning to OCS. Can't go right now, sir, I'm in the middle of instruments school. And he goes on he said well, look, you want to go to OCS or not? Look, don't do that, instruments school, you have to stand in line to get this, this is very important, and you give me another damn date once I graduate. Alright, alright, I'll call you back, so he waited till I graduated, I think the day after I graduated I had orders for OCS. Pack the family again, remember I left them in Charlotte. I got orders to go to Fort Knox at OCS and left them again in quarters. A good friend of mine named Tom Easles, we had gone to flight school together, Tom packed them up and got them up to Newport News up here while I went to OCS at Knox. I went out there and signed in, this was the first class at Knox, this was this big build up, and signed in, and the class didn't start for another week so the colonel in charge said, well, Mr. Hamilton, he said until we get started you just keep your bars on, you know, and go on down to the club and do whatever you're going to do, now you understand that once the school starts you've got to take your bars off, you're going to be just a regular candidate. Yes, sir, not a problem. Come on, I've been a candidate before. School got started, and what we were supposed to do was, I think, 13 weeks at Knox, branch and material, then you go to your branch school for qualifications. Well, because that one was kinds of gummed up and they were breaking new ice, they got DAs approval to do the whole thing there, branch, material and the qualifications, then you go off to your school, and I'm thinking, whoa, I've been around and ridden around in those ATCs and I have watched them, been out on these gunnery ranges where they finally they got these tank guns, wooh, and I said no. I can't do this. I had a hard time getting into flight school with my ears because the M1



had given me ringing ears when I tried to get through flight school, that's another whole story. But, I went to the flight school and I said I can't do this because this will kill my ears, and he said you're right. So, he got approval from DA 13 weeks, let him out and he will join the next class which starts at Transportation at Fort Eustis, so when my guys graduated from that I said bye, guys, then I went and put my bars on the flew the H13 around there and dropped flour sacks on them while they were still going through the branch qualification phase. You know, and going through that I can remember back now, I had to keep certain flying hours, you had to keep up, (?) where you were, so on the Friday nights when they had to do GI parties or (?) inspections, I just booked flying, and then Hasta La Vista. When I got up there at Fort Eustis, I did essentially the same thing. I've been through all this smack before, so, I forget the guy's name that was in my class, but when I got selected to be the company commander to take the class out to, the post was a place up beyond Williamsburg out there somewhere, I don't remember where it is now, Camp Wallace, we went out there, we convoyed out there.

**DePerro:** That is where Busch Gardens is today.

**Hamilton:** Yes, well, I don't remember who is candidate was, he said Hamilton, you son of a gun, I know you're going to get out of this field training somehow, I said trust me, I'm not. Well, as it turns out when we were with the family in Connecticut they met some Navy people and this guy, the husband, was now at Norfolk on a sub and they were commissioning the George Washington Carver the day that we were supposed to be in the field and he had sent an official invitation through channels and it got to me in OCS, and I looked at the tack officer and said I got this official invite and I really need to go to this, I may be the only Army person there, and he's thinking well, hell, let's see. So, he got, yeah, let him go. I don't need to wear this cadet stuff, put your uniform on and go on. That day of the field training we got everybody lined up, and as a company commander I got them out there and as soon as I got them out there, the tack officer, I forget his name came by, Hamilton, Hamilton, Candidate Hamilton, let's go. This guy, I'm trying to think of his name, he said I knew you weren't going to stay out here. Well, the tack officer picked me up, drove me back in to Fort Eustis here, my wife picked me up and I changed into my clothes, went to the commissioning, and I told them now there's going to be a reception later on, so I can't come right back, and he says, alright,

go to the damn thing, go to the reception, but you be back here the next day to catch a truck to go to the field, so the guys out there sleeping in the bush all night and I came the next day on the next truck. OCS was okay. I remember one of the tack officers raising hell at us, I got mine and if you want to get through here you better do what I tell you, and I'm thinking give me a break, you know?

**DePerro:** There was some awful young guys in the tack house. Got turned (?) around, 2<sup>nd</sup> lieutenant.

**Hamilton:** Yeah, that's what it was, it was a 2<sup>nd</sup> lieutenant.

**DePerro:** They had a big problem with that.

**Hamilton:** I can stand it with my head against the wall and let you scream until you get hoarse, okay. I never was ugly or anything, I didn't resist or anything.

**DePerro:** So, when did you graduate from OCS?

**Hamilton:** In June of '66. (?) be in the first class. They let me be the number one graduate. I was the honor graduate, and when they had the honor graduates on the wall out there over the years, I was on there. But, that's history, they've got some more new stuff now. But, General Radly pinned my bars on out there, my wife was there, and off we go into another phase. I think after that I went through AMOK and then off to Vietnam where I had, I arrived over there in January of '67, right after the VC had mortared Holloway, and Don Joyce and I flew in there on a Caribou and had dropped us off at the runway there and I'm wondering okay, am I going to come out with a jeep and pick us up? We're talking about, you know, and Don says hell, I guess they're not, so, there's some buildings, let's walk down there, so we picked up our bags and walked down. We're looking for this unit, oh, they're over there. There was no reception or anything, you're in Vietnam now, bring you damn bag and come on. The 179<sup>th</sup> Assault Support Helicopter Company and Chinook Company, I was in there from January until, I think, about October, and it was good flying, it was a good assignment. I'll tell anybody if you've go to go to war go with a helicopter unit, that is the best way to go. I did some operational flying. I was really a maintenance officer in the 402<sup>nd</sup> TC Detachment. I was the maintenance technician, and a Major Bruger at one point was the maintenance officer but he rotated and I ended up with the maintenance, and CW4 Dell Crowell, great, wonderful guy, we worked together, and after I got shot down, Dell ended up getting



killed in an accident. But, before we get to that I flew some operational missions, and I guess the biggest impact the Vietnam War had on me was an area called 3 tango out west of Holloway, the 4<sup>th</sup> Division, I think it was, they'd gotten their asses shot off. The weather was bad and we couldn't fly in there and retrieve the bodies until a couple of days later. Then we'd fly in there with a Chinook, drop the gate, and they just, they had body bags for some, some they didn't. They just tossed them in there like carpet, cord wood, and that bothered me. It didn't in the beginning, but then I thought about that, you know, and you think that's some mother's son, that's somebody's daddy, you know? That night in the BOQ I remember throwing a can of beer against the wall because it was a level of frustration that it was hard to deal with. And when we would bring them back, drop the tailgate, and they'd haul them out and throw them into the back of 5 ton, and the crew chief would wash the blood out, and the next day we'd keep going. That was my real taste of the nasty side of war because people were getting killed.

**DePerro:** How many times did you do that kind of mission?

**Hamilton:** I think only probably for about, hauling bodies, only about that first month that I was over there because then I got assigned to support the Korean around Qui Nhon and the train, and that was swinging explosives on long slings up so they could blow up in caves and things. And, we flew some of the Korean nightclub acts around, that was nice. But, I remember flying along the beaches there supporting the Koreans at Qui Nhon and the beautiful beaches and palm trees and blue water, and I'm thinking why in the hell are these out here fighting and killing each other? Why don't they just put their guns down, get some American entrepreneur come in here and open up some resorts, and they can put this stuff behind them. But, they had a different cause, and doing something different, but it was beautiful, beautiful country. October of that year Ruber had gone and Dell and I had the maintenance, and we worked our butts off, it was keeping the Chinooks going.

**DePerro:** How many Chinooks did you have in the unit?

**Hamilton:** I think there was, seems like there was 16, and we had a Huey, two platoons and a Huey. Again, we worked our butts off. With items on short supply, we'd call up the 1<sup>st</sup> Cav over at An Khe, I need a transmission, and what you did when you stopped these things as much as you could because when an airplane goes down, you need the

damn transmission because they need the airplane. So, we borrowed engines, we borrowed transmissions, as soon as we'd get ours in, we brought them back, so we had to do stuff like that to keep them going.

**DePerro:** So, you had a relationship with the other maintenance people?

**Hamilton:** Yeah, and you had to do that in order to stay alive, well, to support the flying mission as much as you could. I think it was the 604<sup>th</sup> was our DS unit, right next to us out there, and we had a good relationship with them. Normally if you put it in DX you've got to take the aircraft down there. Let's work this out, you know. We're only supposed to do so much, but let us do what we can, then what you guys need to do, you all come up here and do it. Every now and then we'd have to take one down there, but most of the time they stayed with us. We did some of their echelon, what we could, because we knew what the hell we were doing, then what they needed to do they'd come and do it. And, that worked very well, great relationship with the 604 and other maintenance units around there swapping parts.

**DePerro:** What sort of availability do you figure you kept during that time that you were there, what was your percentage targets?

**Hamilton:** I'd be guessing honestly, because I don't remember. I really don't remember.

**DePerro:** Did they fly everything flyable?

**Hamilton:** They flew everything that we would get them, and the answer is yes and no. Because if we had ten that were flyable, they needed twelve. So, we gave them what we could afford to give them in order to keep working on enough so that we could have them support them tomorrow, and that's always been my experience the issue between operations and maintenance. Operations is most everything you've got, if you give them everything you've got and you fly them into the ground you can't support anybody then, so after awhile we got it in to how many do you need tomorrow? Well, how many have you got? Well, that's not the question. Well, I need six, okay, we can give you six, and if you got in trouble we've got two more in there that we've got three hours on this one and four hours on that one, then we can keep you going. So, we worked it out and then it was good.

**DePerro:** Did they ever talk about any of that stuff in AMOC?



**Hamilton:** Yes, they did because that was some of the stuff you had to know in order to keep the unit flying. It wasn't a lot but it was something I remember they got it across to, if it was your job to support you need to give them everything you could, but understand that when you fly all your aircraft into the ground your organization can't support anybody, then the war effort suffers because you weren't smart in the cards you were playing. You really learned it on the ground, but you went through it on how to program, you know, and if you got on a couple of items don't fly that one today, fly it if you have to, but you have to learn that. I guess one of, two critical things happened there, actually three, I look back and say the nine cat lives, I used up a lot of mine. The engine failure in Korea, well after Vietnam, we had an aircraft to go down, and Don Joyce was flying with somebody else, that was down in operations not in maintenance, he gives us mayday, mayday, mayday, shrimp boat whatever the tail number is, we've lost the transmission. When a Chinook loses a transmission it's a bad day and somebody says what's going on? Shut up, shut up, shut up. Mayday, mayday, mayday. Well, it turns out they lost the oil filter on the (?) transmission. The four studs that hold it in blew out, dropped the filter down so all the fluid poured out all in the cockpit, so they didn't lose the transmission, they lost it but they didn't. So they got on the ground, let's get it up in the air because you can't leave a Chinook out in the bush overnight. We always had several crews, get your gear, let's go and flew out there and looked at it and said we can't change the transmission, okay. Those guys were hauling barium material that day, and I remember saying okay, here's what we're going to do. They had two by sixes boards. I told the crew chief get me an ax, push one of those boards all the way up in the where the cockpit area is up here, under that filter there, cut me a piece off and jam it up under there. Make a little nick in this one on the bottom so it will hold there and we're going to brace that sucker in there, and we did that, put it up there. The battalion maintenance officer came in in a Huey and said what are you all doing? I said we're getting ready to fly it out of here. That's not going to work, is it? We don't know, but that's what we're going to try unless you've got a better idea. I don't think you guys ought to do that. Okay, got it, thanks a lot. I think he reported it to the company commander, and he came in, Jesse? Yes, sir. You need some help? No, sir, I'm going to fly it out with the flight engineer. You all going to be alright? We got it, we don't need anybody else in here. So, they got

out away, and he got out in the back, now I said okay, get up in there and put the transmission fluid in it and start pouring. Is it leading? Keep pouring, is it leaking? No, keep pouring. Is it leaking? No, keep pouring. We got it, sir. I said close it down and come on. He got out in the back and I said now watch it because when we get one on the ground and it starts belching a little bit, that's when it might leak, it leaks in the back you know, the one on the ground we got that one started, glug, glug, glug, glug, glug, glug. We're doing alright, we're doing alright, we're doing alright. Two to ground, glug, glug, okay a little bit faster. Well, one and two to flight is when it's going come loose. Alright, get ready, one and two to flight. Shoved it up there, brrrrrrr, and hell, I said let's go, let's go, let's go, let's go. So he ran inside, up the ramp and jumped up there with me, hawked it up, leaned it over, and we hauled ass out, we didn't have but about 20 minutes to fly back to Holloway. As soon as we got in sight, we're coming in over the runway there and plopped it down and taxied off and okay, let's go, what else we've got going here? So, that was one of the...

**DePerro:** More interesting.

**Hamilton:** Yeah, that was interesting. Don Joyce now was flying one day on an operation mission, every now and then maintenance people would go out and fly operation, of course you need to fly in some of the aircraft to figure out what in the hell are you complaining about, you know, because sometime they describe something that you can't duplicate, alright book me with a pilot and I'll go fly and we'll figure out what's wrong with it. Don and I was flying one day and one of the engines came off (?) quick, had a swing load under it and a bunch of (?) yards in the back and this thing is losing altitude. Don is at the controls trying to stay over the low area while the crew chief trying to (?) the load wouldn't come off. The crew chief had to get into the hell hole with a machete, get rid of that damn load because that one engine just wouldn't pull it all, so another exciting day we had there. Remember I said those days about going back to the bar? That about wore my nerves out. I guess one of the other I remember over that at Holloway was it got cold as hell at night in the highlands, it got warm during the day, but when the sun went down, anybody was up they can tell you the temperature went with it. It didn't go to freezing, but, it went down to bone chilling cold. I got so I'd sleep in my long underwear, we always had a couple of sheets, two blankets, poncho



liner, and my damn flight jacket on top of that to stay warm at night when it was cold up there. And when it rained it was mud for months, and when the rain left, it was dust for months. I got some pictures of it, but I don't know where they are now. The best way to go to war if you've got to go is to fly. We ran the eight models up to a thousand hours, I think that was the TVO for whatever it was the rehaul for the helicopters to send them back, I think it was a thousand or 1,200 hours, I don't remember, but we came up, it was time to do it. Maintenance always working, very busy, but I said okay, what I'll do as the a maintenance officer I'll go with the (?) pilot, we'll go down and fly one down and let them figure out how to do it then we won't go anymore, we'll just let the operations fly them down there. That day we took off and the weather was bad between Holloway and Saigon the front. Well, we're going to go overland anyway because I'm in maintenance, I got to hurry up, remember the airborne? Got to hurry up, get the God damn thing down there and hurry back. We flew down to (?) and from (?) south it was socked in. I guess we stayed there a couple of hours, (?) the Air Force (?), when is this thing going to break, we've got to get out of here. He said the only way you're going to get out of there is you can fly off R and get VF on top and fly down when the weather's good once you get down there. I had an instrument ticket, the copilot had a tactical instrument ticket, but neither one of us had been flying on instruments, that's a death warrant, and I know when you're trying to kill yourself, and we ain't going to do that today. We left (?) and flew low level back to the coast because I figured we'll get to the coast then we can sneak through, stopped and had lunch, I think with the 180<sup>th</sup> at (?) I believe it was with one of the other Chinook companies, and we took off out of there flying down the railroad track, not the best way to do it but when you're pushing it in bad weather that's one way to do it. We had gotten beyond (?) almost to the point where we could break out over the water and get out of the mountains there. And, around, came in through the windshield on my side, went into my flight helmet about here, came out in the back, jerked my head around, went into the (?) shot out the sass and some of the hydraulics and I'm flying because when you're doing stupid stuff you need to be the one doing it. I'm flying and the copilot looks at me and said, because Chinooks (?) when the sass goes out it starts to waddle, waddle, waddle, waddle, waddle, waddle, and he looked at me and said what the hell's going on? And he said my God, you've been shot! And I could feel the warm blood

running down my face here and I'm thinking I feel alright, but what occurred to me I said, when my head, I said, I don't know if you've ever jerked your head around too quick and get that snap in here, it's like a spasm, ouch, and I said, God damn it, you've had a stroke. A stroke? I got shot. He got the controls and I looked around for my right hand and it was like this, he got the controls and I said okay, okay, it's (?) because there was a Vietnamese compound up ahead of us up there. He got it into there, okay put out a mayday. (?) I was (?) everything I guess I couldn't find my arm for awhile. He put out the mayday and within a couple of minutes a Huey that was just coming back from being picked up at the 166<sup>th</sup> where we were going, them guys were coming back in a new Huey, and they wap, wapped in behind us, and everybody was coming up, I said get out of the God damn cockpit, get on the guns, somebody might try to come in here trying to kill us. I said okay, get my first aid pouch, took my helmet off, put that on, and they were doing it gently. Tighten it down damn it, I don't want to bleed to death now. I never bleed to death but I was bleeding. Put my helmet back on, okay, I'm going to go with this Huey up to (?), I'll get patched up, and I'll be right back, famous last words. That just don't happen. Well, the Huey picks up on his way to (?), which way is he going? Straight up the track that we came down, and pretty soon bam, bam, bam, bam, bam, holes in the Huey, and in the fuels I can smell JP4, and they're going mayday, mayday, mayday, we've been hit, we're going down. Well, I had plugged in the intercom and said no, no, hell no, don't stop here, we're in the kill zone, I said it hadn't blown up now, just keep flying the son of a bitch, so we flew out of there on up to (?) Air Force Base, and they were getting ready to launch the rescue helicopters, but we hobbled in there and I got out and I'm sorry guys. Hey, you ain't got a problem, and thanks a lot. I don't know who the crew was or anything like that. When that stuff happens you don't know what happens. They kept me overnight there and all night long it was, if you slept 15 minutes you were good because they were always opening your eyes and shining the light in see if you were going crazy or dying, I don't know what the hell was going on, you didn't get any sleep. The next day I medevaced out on a helicopter to Na Trang with the God damn doors back on it with a bandage on and that stuff was blowing against your head and that was not any fun. They got me there and cleaned the wound, patched it up and sewed it up. I can tell you that cold sodium chloride will shock your ass when they pour it on a



wound, that stuff will put you into shock. They had to do all that to wash it. I remember they had a black female major that was a nurse, and she said scrub that everyday because you've got to keep it from scabbing with that damn sodium chloride stuff. That hurts! That hurts! But the idea was to not let it scab, I guess that's the deal. It's got to heal from the inside. Well, that was painful as hell, but I got it and looked at it and I had a big bald spot up there for a long time, and then when my hair starts, it's pretty much gone now. I remember while I was there in the hospital, and they had everybody in there, the guys from, some of the airborne troops that had gotten shot up. One guy was in there had gotten shot in his skull from the middle down about to his ear was missing the bone, was gone, and his head was flat in there. I remember reading letters to him and writing letters home for him to his family because he couldn't do it, and that was, that would touch your feelings. I made use of myself in there with that guy. But, some of them wouldn't make it through the night. I think I must have been there about 30 days in that neurological ward, in the neurological ward for awhile but in some other open ward because one young guy had gotten shot in the hip and his whole leg was just ripped wide open. I remember waking up one night, because you go to sleep and everybody was there and tomorrow somebody would be missing, and you wonder, what the hell, okay, maybe they left. One night I remember waking up and the doctors and nurses were there scurrying around somebody, the next day the bed was empty. I learned then that people were dying at night. I'm not sure if that's when the death angle comes, but I'll tell you what I concluded at that point, I will not sleep at night. When the lights went off at ten, I'm wide awake until 6 o'clock in the morning when the nurses and doctors came in and started scurrying around, I stayed awake. I would sit up in there and bite my fingers until it hurt, hold my breath until I almost black out to stay awake until the next morning. And, when the sun would come up and they would come in, time to eat, okay, eat, eat, eat, time to get up and do something, okay, because I was just dead because I would not sleep at night. If I dropped off to sleep, it's like your driving and all of a sudden you catch yourself asleep, it scares the hell out of you. For the time I was in there I would not go to sleep. Then I decided you ain't going to heal enough to get back to your unit so we're going to send you to Japan. I went to Japan I think it's the 402<sup>nd</sup> some kind of hospital, and stayed there for about 30 days and finally the doctor said you got your time

in, you might as well go home because you've got enough time for your tour to be over. If we send you back the only thing you can do is sit in another hospital (?). So, came back to Portsmouth Naval Hospital, and the wife never knew I was shot down till I came back here and told her the story because I used to write her every day with my right hand. When I got shot in the head over here the right hand wouldn't work so I had to write with my left hand, but I lied and said I fell off a truck and hurt my (?) whatever it was. So, she didn't get the truth until she came to pick me up. Here's something stranger than fiction, my sister-in-law who's downtown can tell you this, she called up my wife one day and said have you heard from slim today? No, I get letters from him everyday. She said if you don't get a letter from him call me. Okay. She got a letter but she called her anyway, she said I got mail. She said okay, she said well, I just saw slim in the house, me in her house in Newport News. She's in the bed watching TV and I came into her doorway, she said I had some kind of old clothes like some kind of old fatigues or something, my jungle fatigues, and he had a helmet, some kind of old helmet under his arm, and had blood running down his face, and she said (?) talking to her and said Bobby, I got something to tell you, and she said Slim, what is it? Bobby, I got something to tell you, Slim, what is it? It was like she could hear me but like I couldn't communicate back to her, I mean she couldn't get the signal back to me, I think she might have said tell Kat I'm okay. She told my wife that, and I didn't know that story until I got back here. When things like that happen it makes me a little bit more of a believer. There's other stuff going on in the world that we can't touch, feel, and smell, whatever like that. Well, after some recuperation, whatever you do when you get shot and sit home, rest and recuperation, I forget what it's called, anyway I was assigned to Fort Eustis, had reported in March of '68 to work with Colonel Hicks, Gene Hicks. I reported in to Gene Hicks, he's a great guy, I had known him for years, this was the first time meeting him then, but he had a biting reputation that would get around. One major reported in with me, and he chewed that major's ass out because he didn't have, his hair wasn't cut right, and he introduced us both to FM 20-5 whatever it is, some basic soldiering, it may have been drilling ceremony, something like that, but he introduced us to that. He said this is your Bible, this is what you go by. Okay. I never had any problems out of him, but as the AMTD commander, we had hundreds of aviation maintenance personnel then. Aviation



maintenance was pretty much the T school during the war. And, Colonel Hicks would come out in the morning when the troops were going to breakfast or be out there at night when they were going. He wouldn't be sitting in his officer, he'd be on the corner standing somewhere watching, seeing what was going on, you just needed to have your act together. That's all you had to do, if you had your act together you didn't have any problem out of Gene Hicks, but if you didn't you had a ass chewing, so that was my first encounter with him, but a great guy, I'm sorry that he ended up now being real sick. I spent from '68 and through '69, '70, I was the company commander of one of the training companies out there under DeMaria, I can't think of his first name now, anyway, he was a great guy. His son has a market down the street down there, John...

**DePerro:** He has the fish market?

**Hamilton:** John DeMaria, great guy. (?) One day I got orders to Vietnam, and General Post was in the barber shop, I went in and he says Jesse, I hear you're going back to Vietnam? Yes, sir. He said, well, you want to get in 34<sup>th</sup> Group? Group didn't mean anything to me much then, that's the major Transportation Headquarters. If you can swing it, and he said I'll see what I can do. Well, when I got back over there I'm at (?), I was a captain then, Hamilton, Captain Hamilton, Yep, (?) come on, got on the jeep and took me over to 34<sup>th</sup> Group Headquarters. I don't remember who had 34<sup>th</sup> Group then, but Don Jersey got it later, he was a great guy, got to have a little reputation and a bite, but he was a great guy, too, kind of like Colonel Hicks. I remember I was working in the S4 on the rail of Lt. Col. I forget his name, and Colonel Jersey says I need somebody to take over the 166<sup>th</sup>, John (?) is rotating and I want somebody with some experience down there. See if you can get me one of these retrained warrant officers somebody like that that's been around a little while, I forget this colonel's name, he said well, you got one in the S4 over there. Who? Hamilton. Alright, send him in here. I want you to take the 166<sup>th</sup>. Young (?) leaving, you got it. So I went and took over the 166<sup>th</sup> Aircraft Processing Detachment, I think that's what it was called. I think we processed in and out of Vietnam most of the aircraft that came into and out of the country. We took the old ones, the ones that were shot up and I had a (?) group there that would tear them down and hose them off and patch them up and get them ready, and we'd take them over to the (?) and load them on 141s, C133s, and I don't know if we did an occasional 124 or not,

I'm not sure about the 124. 133s and 141s, I remember those in particular because an event happened with a 141 one night, it was something else to remember. I had a great crew, the civilian in charge's name was Bill Pew, country boy from somewhere, aw, Captain Hamilton, we can do it. Whatever ya'll need to do you just let me know, them old boys can do it. And, whatever we needed done they could get it done. In fact, that hovercraft at Fort Eustis, I think there were two in Vietnam. It's either that one out there...

**DePerro:** There were three I think.

**Hamilton:** It's either that one or one of the other ones that we packaged at hotel three and sent back to the States. I don't know if it's that one or not, but I've got pictures of it. When they brought that thing in there, and I'm wondering how in the hell are we going to get this over to the (?) hut and get it onto an airplane. And Bill says, aw, it's alright Captain Hamilton, he said those old boy there they'll just fix a cradle for it and put some wheels on it and we'll just drag it over there. They did it. They were good workers, and whatever we needed done he could get it done. One night raining, we were loading Cobras to go back for rebuild, overhaul, whatever, and I was at the BOQ, the Red Bull Inn, I think that was the name of it, and I got a call Captain Hamilton, got to come to the airfield, we've got a problem. That means there's a problem, so I jump and went out there and when they were loading this Cobra into the 141, you've got to hold the tail down, get it in up over the ramp, hold the tail down, then once it gets to the point where you can let the tail up so it won't hit the top you can let it down. Well, it was raining, wet, and one of the guys slipped, kicked the strap loose and that Cobra cut that cross beam up there on the top of that damn 141. And, if you recall when those aircraft are on the ground they have a certain block time you got to get them unloaded, load them, they got to be wheels up. And, if they didn't, the Army was at fault and there was hell to pay between the Army and the Air Force. It was an ugly scene if we were the cause of not having wheels up, and we never missed it, but here was our golden opportunity. God almighty, what are we going to do? We got to get that repaired, okay. Get the Air Force airport guy over here, get one of those guys here, you guys got somebody that can do it? Yeah, you got to get them over here, okay, well get somebody over here and let's get it done right now, let's hurry up and get it done, we can't wait. So, they got some Air



Force guys over there, got a platform and built it up there and got up there and drilled some holes in it and some welding and got it fixed up there, loaded the other couple of Cobras in there, and that sucker got out of there in that amount of time. That's what runs you, that's what wears your hair out.

**DePerro:** Gray hair.

**Hamilton:** Whew! Really, some of that stuff will wear your nerves out. I can remember several nights over there, I'd go in, go to bed, sleep an hour or something, wake up and just tossed and turned, just couldn't go back to sleep because just nerves are shot. And, I said I've got to tell the colonel tomorrow, I can't fly anymore, I can't do it anymore, but then drop off to sleep, wake up, and the fan in the rooms there, get up, shower, get your breakfast, get the jeep, go on and do it again, until it was time to go home again.

**DePerro:** We're now on tape 2.

**Hamilton:** Those were some of the moments of the war that like I said impacted on you, there was stuff you had to do.

**DePerro:** Well, you'd go along these long periods of time when everything was pretty routine, it was intense, but it was pretty routine. All of a sudden some big thing would pop out.

**Hamilton:** And, even though it was routine it was intense. You were holding your breath even at that point.

**DePerro:** And it was seven days a week.

**Hamilton:** Yeah, seven days a week. Well one of the things I mentioned about Colonel Jersey, when the U.S. forces were supporting the Vietnamese, the Vietnamese went into either Laos or Cambodia with a big helicopter operation and they were getting helicopters shot down right and left, and Colonel Jersey came by, he was keeping his finger on the pulse of what was going on, and all the ones getting shot down they needed to replace some helicopters, and of course we were a processing detachment at Saigon and another one was at Da Nang, I think there might have been another one at Cam Ranh.

**DePerro:** I think Qui Nhon had one. I don't remember one being at Cam Ranh, it was at Qui Nhon, I don't think there was one at Da Nang, because I was at Da Nang.

**Hamilton:** Yeah, there was. There was one up there, I'm not sure where it was, but there was a processing element up there one of the units because I went up there getting back to Colonel Jersey, he was up there at one point and went by the...

**DePerro:** Was it Red Beach?

**Hamilton:** I think it was at Red Beach, went by the unit up there and they said, whoever it was reported to Colonel Jersey that they had so many aircraft up there, they needed to be put (?) and they didn't have enough people and they were behind. Colonel Jersey came back to Saigon and told Colonel Dick Orell, who lives over there on the Eastern Shore, somewhere there not too far from here, to have Hamilton send some civilians up there to Da Nang and put those aircraft together up there, get all the civilians. I don't know if you recall then, but he was big at moving people where they needed to be moved to get things done, and certainly you can understand that, but you couldn't just tell civilians to pack up and go up there and do that.

**DePerro:** What time period would this have been, what year are we talking about?

**Hamilton:** I think it was in early '70 because I rotated out in March. It might have been February, March, or April of '70, is that right? No, '71 because I went over there in '70, but it was getting near the end of my tour and I remember that Colonel Jersey comes by and tells Colonel Orell to get Jesse to move those people up there. It wasn't a real big deal to get it done, but you just can't order civilians to do anything, I was real sensitive to that, so I went to my guys and told Bill that we've got some aircraft up there Colonel Jersey wants us to go up there and get it done, and could he get some guys to go for him. I mean, that's the way we worked. I couldn't make them go to another place, I think Colonel Jersey thought I could, and maybe we could, but it didn't appear to be within my power so, when I asked them to go we had that relationship so he said sure, Captain Hamilton, we'll get something going. And, we got the Air Force to, let me digress a minute, I think it was an otter that used to run from down south there on a routine flight all the way up to Da Nang and back.

**DePerro:** I never saw an otter up there, I never saw an Otter in Vietnam.

**Hamilton:** I'm almost certain it was an otter. I'm guessing it was because it was an Army flight, I don't think it was a beaver because I saw beavers over there, in fact I flew several over there, but I think it was an otter, and I'm thinking no, I'm not sending my



people up there on this because it was in bad weather, and this kind of weather flying up to there, no. So, I went to the Air Force with the airport people we had been working with there and told them I had a tactical emergency, I need to get some people out to Da Nang up there to do some work. And, they booked us in C130 and put my people in it, sent them up there and, I forget the warrant officer's name, but he was up there, they got up there one morning and he reported back exactly what we knew. Captain Hamilton, there's only three aircraft up here, by noon he had put them together. I think about 2 o'clock he called me and said we put them together, I tested on them, and we're going to the beach, there's nothing to do. I said you all go to the beach. Then I said the next day you all come on home, then I got on a C130 and went up there the next day and looked because Colonel Jersey was going to get in your knickers if you didn't do what he told you to do. I went out there, the work was done, and looked at it all and came back on the C130 and came back and was able to report that the work done, there's nothing to do so I brought my people home. He and I had one other, and it wasn't any real issue, it was the way he was wanting it done, and I got the work done, we got it done what he wanted.

**DePerro:** It's that kind of miscommunication thing, sometimes when the boss asks if there's a problem somebody feels obligated to give him a problem. So they give him a problem to solve and it turns out it really isn't, it's just a local blip on the radar.

**Hamilton:** It was just a local blip because we knew what was coming to us, we knew what was going into Da Nang, we knew what was going into Qui Nhon, we knew each one's backlog was, it wasn't a secret or anything, but this guy told him something that wasn't true and we had to react to it, but in half a day it was done and we kind of wasted a little bit of time, but you know, the boss got what he wanted.

**DePerro:** Talk a little bit more about the civilians supplementing the military maintenance people. What percentage of the 166<sup>th</sup> was civilian versus military?

**Hamilton:** I'm trying to remember, but I think the 166<sup>th</sup>, there was only a handful of military, I'm guessing no more than about, I'm thinking back, no more than about 20 military people if that number.

**DePerro:** And the rest of the staff was contractor personnel?

**Hamilton:** Contracted civilians, contract, they're from (?) they changed the contract a couple of times went from (?) to somebody else, but it was the same people. They

worked the flight line, they did the tear out the aircraft and putting it back together, put on tail rotors on them, all of it, they did the whole nine yards, and I had military TIs, a couple of military people that, but the workforce were civilians. Without the civilians we wouldn't have done anything.

**DePerro:** I was in the 1<sup>st</sup> Cav and I was in V company 15 TC Battalion, and I was the shop platoon leader and the shop platoon was about 110 – 115 people, and then we had about 20 civilians, it turned out they were all the shop trade so they sort of worked for me, I mean they had a lead man who was their boss when something needed to be done I would go talk to him, it was the same kind of thing. We were up in a division, and we had no hanger for anything, we were working outside, it was very primitive. The more high tech kinds of stuff were usually, and if I had a really difficult job which usually those civilian guys would do that because they had the experience. The military guys were all right out of Fort Eustis, they had on average six months on the ground experience as mechanics and they did a good job, but they were very new.

**Hamilton:** I'm trying to remember now, the numbers really escape me, but I remember that we had military and civilians doing the work, and I remember once the one of the warrant officers came in and said the troops were pushing a little too hard. I wondered what's the problem, he said well, and we did everything we could to get them out as fast as we could, we had light sets that we would do some work at night, but the work at night was the heavy stuff where you could see the big bolts and things, and it did not require them to do stuff that was hidden through shadows and all. I remember there was some pressure from the leadership put some more people on it. Well, you can only put so many people on an aircraft, then you start getting in each other's way, then you're not quite sure what the other guy did. There was a limited number of military personnel, as I reflect upon it the PIs and a couple of guys in the motor pool, then we had some guys that would work on the flat land dragging the aircraft in and out. All the real work was done by civilians.

**DePerro:** (?) position. Where was the unit located?

**Hamilton:** At the Hotel 3, we actually operated out of Hotel 3 right there at Saigon.

**DePerro:** And, they would have had about how many total people roughly?



**Hamilton:** The number escapes me, honestly, if I backed up and pulled it all together I would say with the civilians and the military, I'm guessing now because I really don't remember, I'm guessing a max of 50 people, and that was including, I was a commissioned officer and we had about two, always had about two warrant officers as test pilots because that what we did, all we did was test fly them after they put them together.

**DePerro:** So, talk about the mission a little bit then, so replacement aircraft coming from the States would come in by aircraft?

**Hamilton:** Come in by civilian aircraft (?) then we would have a team that would go over and unload them off the aircraft, that was our job was to offload the rebuilds and bring them over on lowboys whatever we had to bring them over to the heliport, and some of them came in cradles. I remember the Huey that was the main fuselage here, the tail bone over here on cradle, and the blades on the boxes, and they'd bring them over, and put those things on them, and we would test fly them, lock them on the line and people from the field would come in and get them. The ones that were battle damaged and over aged or needed to be rebuilt, they would truck them in from different locations and we'd take them, decontaminate them, they had to meet USDA specs, fumigate them, tape them up and store them ready for the aircraft to come in, and one would come in if it was on it's way back out to Corpus Christi we pull the new ones off put the old ones on, flatten it up and be gone. I think if I looked at some of the papers then we were running a major portion, over 50% of the aircraft that was processed in and out of Saigon came through the 166<sup>th</sup>. It was a very busy organization.

**DePerro:** Do you have a guess of how many aircraft a year you were doing?

**Hamilton:** No, the numbers are in some of the papers, in the history stuff over there. I couldn't keep up with, I don't know, I don't know.

**DePerro:** On a routine day, about how many aircraft would show up with, how many Air Force planes would come in at any normal day?

**Hamilton:** I'd be guessing again.

**DePerro:** A couple a day?

**Hamilton:** I don't think it was a couple a day because I don't think we could keep up with that. It more have been like two or three a week, because I don't think it was a daily

thing of being there, but then again, it might average out to that because one may come this morning and another one this afternoon, it kept us going but I would be guessing honestly to come up with some numbers. Maybe in something else I pick up later that will show the numbers, but I don't remember the numbers. After finishing up with the 166<sup>th</sup>, I came back and after my second tour DA let me go to Moose Trap, is that right? Yeah. I think I had asked earlier how about finishing up my degree? Because I think at that point that was a certain amount of time as a commissioned officer you needed your degree, and the ax started falling when I was in the degree program.

**DePerro:** The war was ending they started the RIFs, and the big thing was who doesn't have a degree was easy to say degree or no degree, you need to look at the file.

**Hamilton:** When I came back from my second tour, I guess they figured if you make it through two tours okay, we owe you, so I went to University of Nebraska Omaha, and while I was in the degree program there in '72, there were people getting touched on the shoulders you've got to go. I think it was at that point we were reaching that period like you say, you've got your degree or if they looked at you and you ain't got it, you're not close enough, you're gone.

**DePerro:** I was at Fort Eustis in the Advanced Course in '72, and there was a hundred people in my Advanced Course class and ten of them got RIFed during the class, and they let them stay till the class ended and then they were done. It was not a good moral time. It was about 10,000 guys, it was two RIFs of 10,000 each during that period.

**Hamilton:** I'm not sure if I had gotten back to Fort Eustis, there was one year when they had a RIF and congress said let's get rid of some of the RAs because we were really kicking out a lot of good reserve officers, I think they approved some number of RAs to RIF, I think I was at Fort Eustis then, and that took, that wore your hair out, too, because I think they were getting all those people within my year group. But, I found out later that I think my year group had started counting when I became a warrant, so I was not within that immediate zone that they were killing people, in the killing zone, because I think they were counting my warrant time, and I was a little bit beyond that point there, but they were unloading and it took some holding your breath to see if you were next. I boot strapped at Omaha, and out of there in 1972 I went to Thailand, came out of there and went to Thailand for two years, and I was the motor officer for the Bangkok



detachment, Thailand support command sub organization in Bangkok. There was a motor pool in Bangkok, again where I had a handful of military personnel and about 140 local national drivers. I think, I'm trying to remember if there might have been 15 military people, just a handful, and that was another situation where you learned something about the Army. Being in the airborne and having been around awhile, that's the way the Army works. Now I'm off to my first Transportation assignment.

**DePerro:** Your commission was TC?

**Hamilton:** Yeah, I was commissioned TC rather than aviation all the place doing other things. So, here's a transportation assignment and they are 58-1, that's the bible for Administrative Transportation Support, and I got me a copy and that's what I went to Bangkok with, and got over there and it was a rude awakening the way the Army works. It worked all right but there are different places it works a little bit differently, and you got to adjust to that, that's the way it is. I got with 551, and when I came into the headquarters oh, somebody introduced me, I had a sponsor pick me up at the airport and the family, and dropped the family off.

**DePerro:** So, you had a company tour here now, so you had your wife and how many kids with you?

**Hamilton:** A wife and six kids. Was it six, no because the eldest son had graduated from high school, he stayed back with an uncle, so wife and five kids were in Bangkok.

**DePerro:** So it was a crowd.

**Hamilton:** It was a crowd, it always a crowd, so got the family settled in a hotel over there, the (?), it was a nice place, all they did was eat and play in the pool and that fun, and I went to work and the sponsor introduced me as the new motor officer, and there was ha, ha, ha, you're the new motor officer huh? And, I'm thinking ha, ha, ha. It turns out the Army in certain places operate a little bit different. So, when I got there, I don't remember the guy's name who was the motor officer, but he was an infantry guy and he spent all of his time down there trying to catch up with the drivers who were stealing gasoline. Everybody was stealing gasoline, you couldn't run the motor pool and focus all your time on that, but that was he was after, and they were angry as hell. In fact, before he took over I think some sergeant had gotten killed because he was getting in the way of stealing gasoline. I didn't mean to get killed and we wanted them to stop stealing gas,

but we needed to run the motor pool, too, so I think his name was Brice Barnes. I don't remember now, that may have been it, but he left when I came in and took over. First thing I wanted to do was, what have we got here? We've got a motor pool that runs 365 days a year, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and that's the way we've got to do, and all these Thai drivers, we've got to get it done with them. Okay, I'll tell you, between about 6:30 in the morning till about 8:30 the phone rang continuously because the MP motor, Bangkok TMP, where in the hell is my vehicle? You know? Well, who's supposed to go and pick it up, whoever they sent, you know, and here's another one, you know, there's boxes laying. I started riding the bus around the routes, I got like Colonel Hicks, I want to know where the God damn bus is because I'm going to ride the bus, so I'd ride the bus around, and the drivers started making sure they would stay on schedule. They were stopping the bus and drinking God damn coffee and be where they were supposed to be. It's just a matter of mapping out what needed to be done, and the drivers, okay, if you've got to pick up Colonel Jones tomorrow at (?) you understand that, bring the driver in, make sure he understands that. If you say cop, you know what you're going to do tomorrow, (?) you're going to go to (?) and pick up Colonel Jones at 7:30, you understand (?). Okay, tell me what you're going to do. Huh? So, I had to get the driver leader in there to make sure that he understand exactly what we were supposed to do, and it started getting better, but I'll tell you, that job drove me up a tree because there's a culture thing that you've got to get adapted to.

**DePerro:** Well, it's very different now, you working with civilians again, but unlike the American civilians where in the 166<sup>th</sup> you were working with, technicians who were very well schooled and very professional and your goal was to stay out of their way and let them do their job and to be an enabler to them to make sure they had the right stuff and everything. Now, you go to a different place here where you're having trouble even getting across what the mission is to these guys, and of course the mission's changing every time they go out the gate, so, it's a different kind of mission, and how do you get them to do that. And, also these American guys are getting, I mean these guys from Lear, or...

**Hamilton:** Lear, Ziegler, yeah.



**DePerro:** Were getting paid pretty good money to do what they were doing, whereas these guys out of Bangkok are getting something way, they're getting 50 cents an hour or something,

**Hamilton:** If it's that.

**DePerro:** So, they're making up for that. It's kind of like a waitress who gets a dollar an hour but makes tips, so in this case part of their pay is to steal gas.

**Hamilton:** Yeah, and that's what they were doing. Once we got the operation so it was going, and then it's easy enough to figure out who was stealing gas, just look at the (?), the thing right here. If this Mr. Chong went out at 8:00 and he drove 36 miles and he came back with a full load of gas and he came back, and at 10:00 he filled up again, we know. The head Thai supervisor with platoon, come on in, see this, see this, see that? That's a no-no. Nobody is supposed to be stealing, but if I miss a little gas here and there, okay, I'm not going to get worried about it, but none of this stuff, okay? And, that's how it came down, and he put it out to them, the captain says you guys are stealing too much gas, he doesn't mind a little bit. So, that made them happy, and I could ask them to do almost anything and I got it, if I needed them to work overtime I would pay them because, like you said, the little bit of money they were getting was that much, and I'm demanding a lot of them. Overtime was out of sight, too, when I got there, so I thought I'd squeezing the overtime, squeezing the overtime down to a point where I thought it was reasonable. Well, I had a special forces major that had gotten relieved, out of special forces somewhere, and he came to work in the detachment and he was the XO for awhile, and he called me on the phone and said you've got to cut all the overtime. And, I'm thinking we already cut the overtime drastically, we've got the overtime down where it's manageable, we need that. Yeah, well give them comp time, give them something else, but don't pay them any overtime money. I'm sorry major, I can't do that, these people are working, I need them to work, I asked them to work, and I've got to pay them. And, I'm thinking understand me captain, I apparently don't understand you major, well you come up here to the office, so I'm thinking I don't believe this crap because it's taken an amount of time to win the confidence of these people where they will do whatever I ask them to do, I mean they will lean over backwards and do anything I ask them to do and we've got the gas stealing down to a minimum, and we're driving

millions of miles with good, doing good, and here this guy wants to come and blow my deal. I went up and he gave me a rash of crap (?), and I said okay. Later on Lieutenant Colonel Burns, an infantry colonel, was the detachment commander, and I shared it with him and he said don't worry about him, tomorrow he's leaving, you've got the motor pool where it needs to be, you run it the way you're doing it and just forget about that, so he was gone and we kept doing the right thing, and we did great. I think we had the best running motor pool in Thailand because we had happy workers, they liked what they were doing, they liked the atmosphere and we were getting the job done. I'll tell you how far it went, in '73 there was a coup, a military coup in Thailand, and when we got the word down was don't let any vehicles out, don't support anything today because it's about to be tanks all over the place, people are getting killed and everything, so, everybody's locked in. I remember telling one of my dispatchers, I can't think of the guy's name, we had two gates, go a lock the outer gate, just go lock, we've got two Thai guards out there, go lock the outer gate. Okay, captain. He went up there you know and got it all squared away. He went and closed the damn gate. Well, it wasn't long before a truckload of Thais with weapons and things pulled up there and they wanted those vehicles, and they came to the gate there and the gate guard was telling them no, no, no. So, one of them came back and said captain, you need to go to the gate, you need to talk to them. Okay, I've got to go talk to them. So, I got the supervisor and I said let's go, and we walked up there, and when I'm walking up there I look at the gate and I'm thinking the God damn gate isn't locked, all they have to do is come in here and take everything. Brown was his name, that's it. I'm going to kill Brown, as soon as I get back I'm going to kill Brown. Well, the supervisor took one of their tribal leaders with us there and he explained to them that no, those vehicles belong to the captain, they were not a part of what they were doing, and they were not coming in here to get anything. One of the things that I knew about most of the tribal leaders in there, they carried a pistol, and this one guy that was up there with us that waved them off and tell them to get the hell out of there was a guy that I had tried to fire because he was stealing too God damn gas. I left the rest of them alone but he kept stealing too much. I finally was going to fire him and we took it all the way to the headquarters and the relationships that would have been caused between the country, they said forget it, no hard feelings but you need to quit



stealing so much gas. Okay, cop, okay cop, okay cop, and he went up there and chased those revolutionaries away. Like I said, we had a relationship with the work force and it was a good one, we had fine tuned it down to the point where you didn't blow it. I think one other thing I remember from the Bangkok assignment was the vehicles were being used to transport the commanders to and from their residence, and 58-1 says can't do that, and I'm the motor officer, and I've got to tell my boss, sir, what's going on is illegal and we can't do that. And he said okay, well, tell them they have to stop doing it. And, I told the drivers tell the colonel you can't pick them up anymore, that you can't do that. I got a couple of calls from a couple of O6s and one was I think the name was Candy, he went in the hospital, and he said Jesse, you're doing a great job, you all are doing very good support for us, I don't have any complaints against you at all, but when you get your boss out of his vehicle then I'll be glad to get out of mine.

**DePerro:** Well, we're talking American commanders now?

**Hamilton:** Yeah.

**DePerro:** Were they authorized POVs over there? Did they have cars?

**Hamilton:** Yeah, Bangkok was just a place where it operated a little bit differently, I've got to tell you that. When I told my boss that you've got to, they'll get out when you get out. And, he said well, the general says that I've got the phone in there, this is an extension of my office and I decide (?). Some fights you can't win. It's not worth even fighting, let that alone. It was a good tour, we enjoyed it over there, and the wife got a chance to travel everywhere.

**DePerro:** So, this motor pool had what kind of missions other than, you supported the military complex there?

**Hamilton:** We support the military, we had vehicles that supported the PX, the hospital, Special Forces came and used our vehicles. They came and had permanent dispatch, they'd come in and get it serviced up and be gone with it, we didn't know where they were going and didn't ask questions about it.

**DePerro:** They were mostly administrative type of vehicles?

**Hamilton:** There were all administrative, this was an administrative deployment.

**DePerro:** So, you didn't have any tactical vehicles there at all, no duce and a halves, or jeeps, or anything like that? Sedans?

**Hamilton:** No. Sedans, we ran buses from Bangkok to Samisan and back, the old big Army bus, then we ran in internal bus within the city of Bangkok.

**DePerro:** Did you haul cargo at all, semis or anything like that?

**Hamilton:** No, we didn't have that.

**DePerro:** So, it was purely an installation support (?), the traditional Army base (?) kind of thing?

**Hamilton:** Yeah, I imagine like the same thing they do at Fort Eustis. The only thing we had go out of town was, sometimes the sedans would have to go down to Samisan, but there was a daily bus run, and everything else was within the city of Bangkok.

**DePerro:** Was there any problem with security over there like in Vietnam and those kind of places where people carry weapons because you...?

**Hamilton:** For the military I would say no, and I never was concerned about it. Again for our motor pool we had guards on the gate, we had an outer gate, and then there was where you walk around in here and all, but the inner gate back there where everything stayed locked up at night unless you moved it. But, we never had anybody...

**DePerro:** That was general security kind of, that was not military security?

**Hamilton:** We didn't have anything like that at all.

**DePerro:** Didn't worry about sappers or infiltrations or any of that kind of stuff?

**Hamilton:** No, it was a good tour, it was a safe tour and all. But, then there was another motor pool that belonged to (?) and here's one of the problems I had, (?) vehicles, although they were U.S. government vehicles, were given to the Thai government, and the (?) vehicles, if you came up with your dependents, until your vehicle got there they'd pick your wife up, take her to the PX, take her to the hospital, take the kids to school and all like that with the Thai drivers. Well, I had the Army level support command vehicles that said no, no, no, you can't do that with these. It was difficult a lot of times getting the people to understand that in the beginning, well, look what they're doing over there this those vehicles. Why can't we, they're all government vehicles? It's not the same, though. Those are given to the Thai government and they operate differently. It was a good tour, also my first transportation tour.

**DePerro:** It was two years?



**Hamilton:** Two years. And, then we came back and DA sent me to South Carolina State for ROTC duty, and I stayed at South Carolina State for three years teaching ROTC students, freshmen, sophomores, I was a freshman instructor when I got there, then the sophomores. I didn't teach the juniors but I taught the seniors, so I had three years of teaching down there. It was a good experience, also, different, a different culture. You got to fit in with the civilian teaching environment there, at the same time we've got to teach the military skills and got to get the students in the mindset of quit playing college games and things because you're going into a serious situation. That was a little bit of a challenge, too, but after three years...

**DePerro:** And, that would have been what years?

**Hamilton:** That was '74 through '77.

**DePerro:** Was there any problem, I mean was there any kind of antimilitary sentiment on the campus?

**Hamilton:** No, not at South Carolina State, it was a predominantly black college at (?). No, I would say there was nothing like that, we didn't have anything like that. Everybody was there that came into ROTC department had a good taste about it, even the students that didn't, no. There was nothing like you'd find on some of the larger universities, there was nothing like that at all there. Everybody was in step to get an education, and the biggest thing we had to deal with was get the kid's attention, but once they got into the program it was very satisfying.

**DePerro:** Was ROTC a mandatory subject for the student body, or was it all electives?

**Hamilton:** I'm trying to remember, no. It was elective. I was about to say freshman, sophomore were mandatory, then you could get out of it, but no, everybody didn't have to.

**DePerro:** When I was in college it was mandatory, all freshman and sophomore took ROTC. So, I was at John Carroll University, big TC school, and the corps of cadets was 1,500 students, it was a lot of students.

**Hamilton:** We had a fairly large group, also, but I can't remember the number, (?) get the numbers I don't remember. There were several students that went through there when we were there that ended up as full colonel and made general officer out of South Carolina State. Some of them, we did a real good job while we were there. I think it was

at the time, when I went, it was at the time when the Army I think it was switching over a little bit. It looked like for a long time ROTC assignments was a place where you went to hang out and patch and get ready to retire.

**DePerro:** That was a last tour kind of thing.

**Hamilton:** Yeah, but the group I went there with, we went there with the attitude we came with the mission to train students, get them ready for military duty and stuff like that, and do a good job. Nobody was there getting ready to retire, everybody was there to go in, it was another assignment, get the job done as best you could. I turned out some good products, and the ones the Army couldn't use, we don't want them anyway, and move on. It was there that I got a call and picked up for major. I guess a couple months after that I got another call from DA and they said who do you know? And I'm thinking I know you. He said well, you've been selected for Command and Staff College, you want to go? And, I was at 20 years of service. I said what do I have to do? He said if you go you've got to stay in for two years. Okay, let's do it. So, out of there and the kids said aw, dad, we've got to move again, oh God, we've got to go again. And, they were all up in high school then, most of them. It's tough to pull them out and do that.

**DePerro:** Grade school kids move pretty easy. The high school kids don't move easy at all.

**Hamilton:** I had the wife come up and get me, we built this house here. And, when I went to Leavenworth for the year they came here. So, I was out there by myself, but the wife would come out about every other month and spend a week or a weekend, something like that, so that worked out very good at Leavenworth, and met some very wonderful people that we stayed friends with for a long time. Then I came to my ultimate transportation assignment as the XO of the 6<sup>th</sup> battalion out at Fort Eustis.

**DePerro:** And the 6<sup>th</sup> battalion, what kind of unit?

**Hamilton:** It's the transportation truck, it's the one truck unit there at Eustis. It was the 38<sup>th</sup> first, the 38<sup>th</sup> when I went there. Keysting, I forget Keysting's first name, but he and I, I think he might have arrived a couple of months before I did and I came in as the XO. It was the 38<sup>th</sup> when General Dehaven took over Fort Eustis, and apparently he commanded the 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion, so we had to stand down the 38<sup>th</sup>, and stand up the 6<sup>th</sup>, so we became the 6<sup>th</sup> Trans Battalion with the 100<sup>th</sup> trans, and I think apparently he



commanded also sometime in his career because he was very fond of the 100<sup>th</sup> Trans. He'd come down and go over to the 100<sup>th</sup> Trans and sit with the company commander.

**DePerro:** So, the 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion had the 100<sup>th</sup> Trans Company in it, and what kind of equipment did they have? What sort of trucks did they have?

**Hamilton:** Two and a half tons, five tons.

**DePerro:** So, it was a light truck company?

**Hamilton:** Light truck company. Then we had the 355<sup>th</sup> out of the 38<sup>th</sup> which was the helicopter, the crane company, they were with us, and Emmett Wallace, I need to get him to sign up, and I forget the other guy's name, Rick Fields, that ring a bell? Both aviators, and Rick Fields and Emmett Wallace both were in the 355<sup>th</sup> at that time, and at some point. I'm not sure if the 355<sup>th</sup> moved before I left there, I don't remember now. We had the aviation company, the helicopter company, the 100<sup>th</sup> trans, and probably a couple, the 551, and the 508 which was the Airborne D Company, it was the one that was tied to Fort Bragg. From Fort Bragg, anybody deployed anywhere told people had to pack up and deploy with them. That was our hot company and it was, whenever they'd get an alert they were always ready to go and do what they needed to do.

**DePerro:** Was that light truck, too?

**Hamilton:** No. That was a Cargo Transfer Company. The 551 and 508 were both Cargo Transfer Companies. I remember there Keysting was a great guy, but he was a nice guy, there's nothing wrong with that, but it always has been my experience you need somebody to be a head knocker in your organization, so he was the nice that came and met them, welcomed people to the battalion and all of that, then the colonel would leave and I said okay, Colonel Keysting tell you the way it is and everything he said is true, let me tell you something else, ABCD. I'm the black hat. And, that's when we had a confinement facility at Fort Eustis.

**DePerro:** Oh, I didn't know that.

**Hamilton:** Yeah, they had one down there near 7<sup>th</sup> Group, and you could give confinement duty if soldiers screwed up. Every now and then it came it that. We might have put one or two guys in confinement, but we always did it a little bit differently. There were times when the colonel would be there. Some other company commander

would save their Article 15s, I want you to give this guy an Article 15, Major Hamilton, this dirt bag.

**DePerro:** A field grade Article 15?

**Hamilton:** Yeah, and I never hurt anybody, my intent was always to just get the soldier's attention, and the way I did it I think we were very successful at it, just bring them in and explain it, what in the hell did you do now? Okay, let me tell you something, I'm giving you 30 days in the CCF, I think that's what it was called, 2/3 of your pay, and restriction to whatever the hell it was, and that was just oh, my God! But, I said, okay, I'm going to tell you what I'm going to do, I'm going to give you one more chance. You understand? You're in CCF right now, if you blow your nose wrong, if you stayed straight for let's say 30 days, 60 whatever it was, I'll forget the whole damn thing. And, most of the time that's all it needed was to get the kid's attention, because that was the card. I mean, you're in there now, you can take off your stripes and go on over there and you're reduced to the lowest whatever it was. But, I never did that to anybody, I never had to reduce anybody, never took a penny from anybody, but I'd threaten them and just raise hell with them, and I guess I'm proud to say that many years later I had several soldiers to come by and say hey, major, I remember you, and you did me right. So, it was good. Finishing up as the XO there was my first time I had been to Europe, in 26 years of military service I had never even been to Europe. No assignment, to TDY, nothing, until I got to 7<sup>th</sup> Group. Then I think it was REFORGER of '79 or '80, I was over for six weeks, and that was my first time, the only time I'd been in Europe in all that time in the military. All the rest had been in the far east, so I relate that to a lot of people and they think wow. On the other hand I find that other than the war lots of people spent 2/3 of their tour in Europe, I mean they lived there. But, I went over or REFORGER and had a good time over there and learned something about Europe, and closed out, as I was finishing up they let me be the president of the flying club at Fort Eustis. Colonel (?) infantry, colonel at Fort Eustis, I forget what position he had then, but looked like the flying club just was not one of the thing to be with. It didn't seem like (?) and he was pretty much ready to pull the plug on it, and I went to see him to figure out what is the real problem, and let me see if I could solve the problem, and he said okay. You got to get it in the red, you've got to get the flying time, whatever it is, eliminate these problems



here. After a couple of months he had it all squared away and I retired and he was happy. He had some printing place around here in later years. I meant to look him up but never got a chance to, but I closed out over there, closed out Fort Eustis and retired there, closed out the flying club. I later found out that they shut it down anyway, and I'm flying at Langley now with a couple of the instructors that used to be at Fort Eustis. I (?).

**DePerro:** You retired what year?

**Hamilton:** 1980. June of 1980. I think we vacationed for about three days, and you need to find a job. I applied for a job at Pen Tran, the big bus company. The paper said they needed a transportation planner, and I went down there and applied for it, and they gave me a call and the lady said we really weren't looking for anybody with your experience, we really can't pay you what you're worth. And, I said don't worry about that, I've got the military experience, I want to see what civilians will do, so don't worry about the experience, you just get me something, you're not paying for it, don't worry about the money, I want the experience, I'll take the money. So, I worked down there a year. It was an alright place to work, but during that period Pen Tran, like most of the transit authorities, were being heavily subsidized, they probably still are by the state and the federal government. And, I remember President Reagan said when he takes office he's cutting all these subsidies to these transit authorities. And, I said you all hear that? The free loading is over, we've got to make these routes pay, and the ones that don't pay, and we looked at it and we knew the ones that were paying or not, but a lot of the routes, the buses were going in here because some council person wanted that route because their constituents said their maids ride the buses. Give me a break, it's not paying, yeah, but. And, I think that's why they ran Colonel Hicks off because Hicks was the director down there for awhile. And, as I recall when I went down there, oh yeah, they remember him, oh, it's another one of those military guys, huh? Hicks got down there and put the drivers in uniform and started riding the buses, shaped it up. But, after a year it appeared to me that politically Pen Tran was not...

**DePerro:** Long-term sustainable?

**Hamilton:** No, and they were going to stay on the subsidy level, and they had a lady down there that was a full time grants person, and that was alright but I can look and see that this is not, if the President makes his promise then you all are out of a damn job.

But, I was out at Fort Eustis one day, the wife ended up having a little chest pains, took her to Fort Eustis to the hospital, and I don't like to stay off from work for any reason, I've got to go to work, I've got to go to work. But, that day she was having chest pains, and I called in and they said oh, take your wife to the hospital, okay. Took her out there and waited around, and while they were seeing her I went by CPO and picked up a couple of job applications, and said hell, I've done all of this. They said her heart's all right, I came home, filled out the things, put them in the mail, got a call and said the guy, I forget Bill's last name now, Jesse, I've got your application, you want to work out here? I said yeah, can I do the work? Sure you can do the work. We'll set you up with an interview, and I went out and had an interview, and got hired in 1981, and worked until 2000, nineteen years, almost twenty years as a civil servant there at Fort Eustis. I started as a GS11 in the doctrine office, then Camp, Bruce, I forget his (?), Colonel Camp, said I want you to be the doctrine chief. And, Camp had been in charge of OCS when I was out there. One of the other guys out there was a lieutenant colonel, and I said look, if we screw things up it's your fault, you commissioned us. So, I had a great time at that, as the chief of the doctrine (?) office I was responsible for reviewing Army doctrine and ensuring that Transportation doctrine was supportive of the stuff the way the Army was going and that was a fighting job too, because I got a chance then to see the bigger pictures. Where the combat developers were going, Army doctrine had to follow and be there on time to establish the baseline for new equipment and tactics, so that was a moving above company level stuff, and that was pretty exciting because I got to work again in combat development, work with those people, I got to work at going out to Fort Leavenworth again to see where the Army was going out at the college out there, and I'm trying to think of some of the names that escape me now, but there are a number of new concepts that were being put together then. LOC2 was one in particular I remember and it was where the transportation elements within the support commands, the Deputy Chief of Transportation, they don't have that anymore, and the COSCOM and places like that were integrated into support elements of some sort, I forget what that's called now, and when I saw that working I said whoa, whoa, whoa, it looks like we're losing something here, so, I'm in charge of Transportation doctrine, hell no, we're not going there fellas, so every time they would write something and eliminate those positions, we'd rebut it, and



then at one point the leadership at CASCOM told the leadership at Fort Eustis look, this is the way the Army's going, you tell Jesse to change that God damn doctrine. I'm trying to remember if it was General Small, who called me in and said Jesse, we're going with LOC2, and my boss has told me that, so you all change the doctrine, okay, general, if that's where we're going. And, we went along with it. The Army changes you cannot expect the things to stay where they are, change is the constant, and a lot of us have a hard time recognizing that because we are comfortable in what we've done, what we're doing, and the way things are, and we think this is the way it needs to be, and that's almost always the perspective of those of us at this level who can't see beyond the tree line to see what's going on. That gave me the opportunity to grow a little bit beyond that, don't fight the problem. Some things are going to change and you have to be a part of that, then you find out that that's the way to go and to insist that things remain the same is backward thinking, just turn it loose, be a little bit more forward looking. And the work at Fort Eustis at the Transportation School gave me chance to see that, got a chance to work with some great people at DA, and the Strategic Deployment Division, and the DCSLOG, and the DCSOPS. Got a chance to, again, see the whole Army from that broader perspective. I got a chance to go on a number of major exercises across the country and Japan over in Germany. That again elevated my perspectives in seeing where the Army was going, seeing the changes that were coming about, and then making sure the Transportation School was in sync with it, at least the doctrine portion was. It took a little time, but once you got a chance to see what was going on you could then go back and make the moves in the doctrine to make sure it kept up with it. I did that for ten years, went off to the Army Command and Staff College, and came back and the Army Command and Staff College again gave me an opportunity to broaden my perspective of things looking across the total Army because there were civilians there and a few military, and some of them didn't have much of a clue how the Army worked at all, so when they got them all there it was very good to see that going on and see the changes in attitudes and things, and what the Army was at then was making sure that where we were taking these military officers out of and elevating the civilians into those positions to see if it was going to function right, and that was a good move.

**DePerro:** The civilianization of the Army.

**Hamilton:** Civilianization of the Army, and that was one of the great things we needed to do because they were shifting the green suiters to fighting whatever it is and giving the Army up to the civilians. Well, the civilians needed to know what was going on, and that was a good move on the Army's part. Finished up that and came back. The Army then were drawing all of the troops from around the world, not from around the world, but particularly from Europe, and forming the CONUS (Continental United States) based Army. Well, in my mind then the idea is if we're mostly going to be back here with a CONUS based Army, in order for us to kill anybody if we've got to there and do it. So, then deployment became a critical part of the CONUS based Army, the Army started buying the large medium speed roll on roll off ships.

**DePerro:** The sea/lands.

**Hamilton:** The FSFSs, and Fort Eustis was heavily involved in that because now that the Army's going to deploy, deployment training is centered at Fort Eustis, and the last job I had for about ten years was, one of the critical missions was training the Army how to deploy. I had support from DA what we needed to get done, and we lined the field up, that's the training we got here and Fort Stewart, Fort Bragg, Fort Carson, you name it, everybody was on our list to come and conduct deployment training. The unit movement officer courses, the old strategic deployment course for deployment at Fort Eustis.

**DePerro:** Yeah, I took that course.

**Hamilton:** Okay, we took that to the field, we took the unit movements officer course to the field, we took air deployment training to the field, we took the whole nine yards to the field. I mean, the automation system (?), and I think we did a damn fine job with it because we met the needs, the training, the deployment training needs of the Army in the field. If you brought people from one of these posts to Fort Eustis the max I could get at the class might be twenty people, but I could take two people from Fort Eustis and send them to Fort Stewart and train forty people. At the same time I could send air trans, you know, the (?) and in many instances we were running a parallel course at Fort Eustis and one in the field. And, at one point we got so good that we were conducting a course here with the cameras and the audio equipment so that we were able to Telenet it to a classroom at a post somewhere, and we were training here at the same time we were training there with the same number of instructors. We got very damn good at it.



**DePerro:** You started using some of the modern technologies.

**Hamilton:** Yeah, we were using technology to increase our capabilities, and we had gotten to the point when I left we had the units stacked up for a year. If you want to train it you've got to get your (?) in it (?) and let us know if you want to come to Fort whatever, and we were going to Stewart like every quarter for one of those courses. (?) they had a deployment mission and all of these places like that to the point where we were doing too good a job. If they were having a deployment and they needed to be trained and you got to come and train us, and if you don't come and train us my colonel is going to call your colonel, okay, we don't need to go to that.

**DePerro:** So, the combat units were having turnover themselves, so you had to continually redo this.

**Hamilton:** We had to continually, continually, continually, and it was in order to meet their requirement, and they had a valid need, and we didn't turn it down when the commander of courses would come through that were going out to take these brigades and all, we gave them a briefing, I gave them that commanders briefing there, and told them what we have to offer. When you go to the field and you've got a deployment training problem, we're the solution and you get your guys to come and get with my people, send your people here, if you all can't come, we'll come. When my operations guy tells you no, what he's telling you is we ain't got any room at the inn, but I'm the one that tells you the ultimate no because if you've got a real training problem, we can work it out, and we had a relationship with most of the units in the field. If we've been to Stewart last quarter and Fort Bragg had some people there that deployed go somewhere, we could say look, Bragg has a serious need, let us shift through in and do that. And, most of the time everybody was got it, you guys are doing what you can. And, I think we did a damn fine job in getting the conus based (?) ready to deploy and go and do what it had to do.

**DePerro:** Well, there's a conceptual thing going on here in terms of the Transportation Corps mission. At one point the mission was drive trucks, it was the 6<sup>th</sup> truck battalion. It was you put stuff on our trucks and we'll take it from here to there. But, this is a different kind of mission now, it's a more intellectual mission. When you follow the history of the TC Corps on a wide TC Corps you can get indented the first place kind of

things it was because over a person's career they don't do that many unit deployments. I heard a story recently say that there was a major war about every 17 years, well that's once in your career kind of thing that the war happens and you might be down at the lower grade level or you can't see above the trees, you're just responding. How do you evolve the knowledge, how do you pass down the way to do it to the next generation kind of thing? To some degree what was starting to happen was the professionalization of that kind of instruction and those kinds of processes. It was easy, I was in an air defense at 32<sup>nd</sup> EDCOM in Air Defense Command in Germany for three years and that was the division size unit was 16,000 – 17,000 people, I was the only transportation officer in the command, and the average air defender had never met a Transportation Corps officer in his whole career. So, this was a way to suddenly have TC guys out there meeting the combat arms guys because everybody was getting deployed on REFORGER (?) and suddenly the TC guys were the ones who came in and told you how to organize yourself and get that interface going between what you do and the asset that's going to take you to your work. That was the really good mission for the corps to get people to understand what you did. I don't think that the average infantry officer understood the movement of cargo overseas, not so much moving people but moving stuff around at the strategic level from Bayer, New Jersey, to Antwerp or somewhere.

**Hamilton:** And, that was one of things that we were instrumental in doing at Fort Eustis, because (?) -5 the operations, the fighting manual, if you recall, only covered at one point in-theater operations, here's how you cut, shoot, and kill. When there was a revision that was being done, I don't remember what year it was, when it came out it was right about that time and we said whoa, the Army's mission, the conus-based Army, yes, has a mission to do that, but it has a mission also of getting out of there and getting there, and if you can't get there that mission is null and void, so the first thing you've got to do is do this. And, the Transportation School was the impetus behind the inclusion of strategic deployment concepts and doctrine in one of the (?). That's where we had to break open the can to get the leadership to understand that everybody's here now, the war is over there once you get there, but until you get there with all the stuff that you need in the right order and all of that. The Transportation School was instrumental in making that happen. We went to Leavenworth and said now, you've got to do this, this has got to be



done. There are a number of things that came out of that, I forget the thing that goes on at Fort Eustis out here where the leadership comes in and sit down and look through this whole deployment spectrum here the way it works, and there was a major exercise that went on at Leavenworth, I forget the name of it now, but the division staff all would do some training back at their location then go to Leavenworth and they would conduct combat operations. Well, we were instrumental in getting, it's not warfare, I don't remember what it is now, we were instrumental in getting them to include a deployment package in that so when you got out there...

**DePerro:** Yeah, how do you deploy your forces when they're arriving peace meal?

**Hamilton:** Yeah, and the fact that you're deploying your equipment here on a time frame and the troops are going to fly up, they've got to meet up there, and somebody's got to be there to unload the trucks and everything.

**DePerro:** Somebody's got to be the 166<sup>th</sup> to put all those things together when they come off the ship.

**Hamilton:** Yeah. While I was at Eustis and the doctrine changed, we were instrumental in getting deployment doctrine into the operation manuals, into the infantry books. I forget the numbers of them now, but all of those major capstone manuals at the various branches, the branch capital manuals, once we got into 10-5 it was easy to feed it into the other one and so those people knew that they had a deployment mission. And, then following that with the Strategic Deployment Training Center, that's when we expanded into that capability in doing that for the division, and that merged right in just like it was...

**DePerro:** And, that had to spill over into going to the Navy thing, now we need to have ships to move, what's it going to take to move an armor cav division, what's it going to take to move a mech division, what's it going to take to move these kind of things, and how do you do that? In the war game the real timelines, you just don't put the 101<sup>st</sup> on airplanes and parachute them into Europe and figure their trucks will come in six months.

**Hamilton:** It took some, there was a little bit of pain going through that. General Brown, Dan Brown, was the first one I saw put together a kind of a picture of that. I think there was a movement into the first Desert Storm that he did a briefing on that and showed where the, I don't know if it was the 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain, was loaded up and moved

out and their equipment was sitting some damn where waiting for them, or, and the 82<sup>nd</sup> was supposed to go in somewhere and the transportation unit that was supposed to meet them there and at the airport get things done was loaded in the TIPFED somewhere else, so it was a major...

**DePerro:** You can't get there from here.

**Hamilton:** No, can't get there from here, and all of that stuff had to be pulled together, and much of it came out of General Brown's assessment of what went right and what indifferent in Desert Storm, and that set the stage in getting the doctrine, getting the concept and the doctrine and the subordinate technical procedures infiltrated throughout the Army.

**DePerro:** And, you know, there even earlier Grenada was a wake up call on that, too. Grenada was a non-planned thing, in fact I'm going to do an oral history with a TC officer who was on the landing fleet staff. He was a lieutenant colonel at the time. Basically the lesson there was is this Fidel Castro knew that the invasion of Grenada was going to occur 48 hours before anybody on the logistics staff in the Atlantic Fleet Headquarters knew that Grenada was going to happen because the beans had been spilled by some of the Caribbean countries. The admiral who was the commander of the logistics staff over there refused to tell any of the planning people on this staff, but the thing was planned with no logistics. There was a major crisis then, and this Army TC guys over there, he's doing the coordination with the Air Force for the air assets to go in there, and the actually had a point where they had a four star from Fort McPherson from Forces Command flies to Norfolk to brief the Atlantic Fleet commander on why the Army guys, Rangers, who parachuted in need resupply after three days when the Marines who had come down on a fleet and were being support by the helicopters off the fleet didn't need resupply. We had to explain to them, when they jump in they're coming out of an airplane with only what's on their belly, and in three days they're out of stuff. And, because they were bumping combat units out of the airports to send in supplies, and it was a major crisis on the ground. I had a guy from Bragg, a major from Fort Bragg from the 82<sup>nd</sup> Support Command and Staff down there who was on the ground down there and actually ended up getting his career ruined over the fact that he got down there and he was supposed to move all his supplies, he had no forklifts, he had no people, he had no



nothing, and nothing got moved at the airport, and the Air Force is moaning and groaning and they're shoving stuff off the back of airplanes, it's filling up runway, and nothing could get moved because nobody had planned to supply that operation.

**Hamilton:** That was a thing where the strategic deployment was something that all of the services had to kind of get in on because it was easy to screw it up with the word not getting out. That was one of things, again, that we did at the Transportation School was get into Leavenworth is operational and logistical planning has got to be concurrent. You guys can't just build a combat plan and then hand it over your shoulder and say you guys support it because it won't work that way anymore.

**DePerro:** It's gone too long a distance.

**Hamilton:** Yeah, so this was a thing that we pushed out there, logistical and operational planning, it's got to be concurrent. Let the guy sit there and listen and say whoa, whoa, whoa, you want to go how far and what, okay, let me tell you what our capabilities are, understand what you want. I'm not saying no, but you need to know here's my deck of cards that I can play to support you.

**DePerro:** And, not only that, you need to start playing that in the exercises, because when I was in Europe in this air, I was the S4 of a Hawk Missile Group, when I got there we had gone on these exercises, and what does the S4 of a Group do in the field do? The answer is nothing. I started getting...

**Hamilton:** Everything is simulated.

**DePerro:** Well, I started paying attention, I'd go over and look what the operations guys are doing and they're firing off hundreds of missiles, and I'm going where in the hell are all these missiles coming from? So, the second exercise that I went to the field I put the board up there and I put the real date on the board, so when the ops guys had fired all their missiles off I went down and said well, you're out of missiles, but don't worry, I can get some in a week or two. And they said what? And, that's when the colonel came down and said what are you talking about? I said if these guys are firing, if you're really firing missiles at the rate you think you're firing them and you don't have enough missiles forward to fire more than a day or two then you're out of rounds. There are rounds stored in a bunker 400 miles back there on the other side of the Rhine River which won't have any bridges on day two of the war, so we need to talk about that. And,

ultimately that became a REFORGER lesson, and ultimately my boss went in on REFORGER and said we're out of rounds, I'm pulling my group back to the rear to get them out of the war, and the 4 stars at 7<sup>th</sup> Corps suddenly went whoa, what? And, we ended up getting bunkers forward to bring rounds up in. but, the trick of that is you've got to exercise the way you think you're going to really fight, and you've got to exercise real numbers, too, you can't have this unlimited supply of everything in the exercise.

**Hamilton:** Right. Well, where everything is simulated, you just go there, you get on the ground there, and this is where the war starts.

**DePerro:** Right, just simulate that everything is there.

**Hamilton:** Well, it's been a painful process, but I think that it's pretty much down to a science now, I mean, where we can deploy numbers of personnel and equipment to go somewhere and get it done within a reasonable semblance of order and pull it off because we're proving it now. This is what the whole deal is about to have to do what we're doing now, and Desert Storm showed some of the major glitches there where we weren't hacking it quite right, the ships showing up there and nobody there to, nobody from 7<sup>th</sup> Transportation Group are going to be there for another 60 days and the ship's already there, sitting there, with the tanks all loaded up front there going to kill some enemy, and where are the forklifts and things like that to get them off? If you can't get them off you can't kill anybody, you can't shoot them from the ships. It's been a growing process.

**DePerro:** That was talked about in one of the classes I went to, I can't remember. One of the generals, General Post I think it was, that became the big TC guy made his career basically in Vietnam when that happened, when they had, it was one point off of Vietnam when they had something like 100 ships queued up to be unloaded off of Vietnam, and he went in and put up a simple system and said we won't put the ship at sea until we know that there's a space in a port here in Vietnam to unload it and (?) unload it. They were paying these huge charges like \$10,000 in those days, in 1960 \$10,000 a day, (?) at the rent the ship is a storage facility at sea off of Vietnam and it was costing millions of dollars. They had to have a system to do that. Of course then the Vietnam War ended and everybody went home and nobody learned the lesson. That's part of what has to, the professionalization of the Army, and maybe that's part of what happened when the Army went all professional is having a lot of guys called up when they have this every 17 year



war and you call up a bunch of reservists and they go in and they learn all the lessons and then they go home and nobody wrote them down, nobody's teaching them in any of the schools. We're not exercising those kind of things, and so nothing happens.

**Hamilton:** With the finishing up there at Fort Eustis, I think it was 2000, I arrived at a point where I had given the government its 45 years of pounds of flesh.

**DePerro:** It was 45 years' service?

**Hamilton:** I think it was, let's see 26 and about yeah, 26 military and about 19, almost 20 of civil service, and I bowed out, time to go. You can stick around longer, it's okay, but you still have to lose your flexibility the longer you stay. I remember having a number of majors come in to work for me at Fort Eustis there, and I've always been very open to them when they were working for me, what's your complaint? They don't complain all the time, but if you've got something serious that you think is wrong tell me about it. Don't rip me too long, just tell me. I can understand what you're saying. I remember when I was in Group and I would go up to the T School as the guest speaker and I would chat with some of the students up there, in particular the foreign students, they said oh, we stay in the classroom too much, we want to go to the field, we need to be in the field. And, then 10 years later you get the same thing, you see the same thing. Getting back to the point, the majors come in and say Mr. Hamilton, what we're teaching here, this is not real what's going on. Yeah, but this is the doctrine. Yeah, but the doctrine is not keeping abreast of where the Army is going. Okay, alright, well if it isn't, then we need to change it, that's your damn job. You tell me and let's see what we need to do here, who do we need to influence. And, I went to the field a couple of times as a civilian and saw what was going on, and one of things that I said to some of the people there, and it's true, when you've been around a long time, you've been in the school forever, you repeat what you've heard yourself say so many times you think you know what in the hell you're talking about. That's the critical thing that a school has got to be careful of when you put civilians there and keep them there because they become fixtures, and the only thing they know is what they hear themselves say, and they lose sight. So, when the new majors come in I say okay, you're in charge of it, change it, just change it, that's your damn job when you come in here, just change it, pick that as your charter, don't get mad the Army, don't get mad at Fort Eustis. Understand that change is

something that has to be done, and you're aware of the change that has to be done, just do it.

**DePerro:** When you write a manual, you can come at writing a manual two ways I guess, one way is its history, so you say well, we had a situation, we went out and we did something and it worked, so now we're going to write that down so that we can teach it to other people. There's another way you can write a manual too, and that is to say well, we've got some new equipment now. The difference between Desert Storm one and Desert Storm two is Desert Storm two is being fought totally differently. They didn't have to be air prepped ahead of time, they didn't do this, they didn't do that. And all they guys that found it works successfully in Desert Storm one are going wait a minute, you're just going to screw it up. And the days at the beginning of the way everybody's running around going Oh, my God, we screwed it up. I saw a statistic, when the 24<sup>th</sup> Division went into the desert on Desert Storm one, they went in with nine battalions of artillery in direct support battalion. When the 3<sup>rd</sup> Division went into the desert they went in with one. The 3<sup>rd</sup> Division incidentally is coming from Fort Stewart, so it is the old 24<sup>th</sup> Division, it's been renumbered, so all these guys from Desert Storm one are going oh, my God, you really screwed this up. What nobody told those guys is that the Air Force had built all these bombs that, you know, were magnetically homing seeking, they magnetically homed on tanks, so they used the airplanes as artillery is what they did, and it works, and it worked.

**Hamilton:** And, those are the changes that occur.

**DePerro:** So, the technology compels the changing of the doctrine. I guess it's kind of the ying/yang, it's the who came first kind of thing. Did the doctrine cause the equipment, or did the equipment cause the doctrine? Maybe it happens both.

**Hamilton:** Yeah, they're both because the doctrine with its O and O offshoot of it establishes the basis for the equipment that supports the doctrine. When something new comes along you've got to recognize it and it's got to be accepted and you can't reject it because it's not the doctrine, that's where some of us old guys can get in trouble because this is what the doctrine says, this is the way it's supposed to be done. Okay, I hear you, but you remember yesterday. You can't throw it all out, but you can't also not accept the change in new things that come in that are imperative. Get rid of all those artillery units



that we used to have before. Don't need it anymore. Why? Because as you said the airplanes have become...

**DePerro:** Well, the airplane self deploys, artillery battalions don't. You can fly the airplanes over, you can't fly artillery over, you have to put them on ships so you can get the airplanes there way faster than you can get the artillery there, so that allowed them to kick the war off a lot faster. I think the Iraqis were as surprised as anybody because they were fixed on the doctrine of Desert Storm one. They thought that they understood the progression that the war was going to take, and it took a way different progression than they thought and they got caught with their pants down on every turn on account of that stunning everybody. I think our side was as stunned as their side on how well it worked.

**Hamilton:** I think that's the thing of being open to change, and again when the old guys stick around too long without constant exposure to the new stuff that's going on it's just human nature to get locked in to what you've got here and assume that that's the way it needs to go. It's wrong because the Grand Canyon, millions of years it's taken it to get here, but there it is, but at one point it was not there. It might have been a trickle along at some point, but it's a mile deep now. So, change in constant, and that's what we've got to be aware of as we go on.

**DePerro:** It's also true, too, sometimes change happens because we don't have a mechanism to learn the past. This oral history stuff to some degree is an attempt to set down in writing the lessons that people learn from the old days and what compelled people to go in directions that they went, and understand how far you come sometimes. You need a yardstick to judge where you were way back then and where you are today. I don't know that earlier ages, in the middle ages the guy, he had a sword and swords didn't change much between the year 1000 and the year 1500, the 500 years the sword was a sword, was a sword, was a sword. And, suddenly here we go off to fight wars, and when you look at some of the people I've done oral histories for that flew Army aircraft to WWII and you look at what's going on today, you go oh, my God, look at the difference here. You can't even imagine how far we've come unless you go back and look at how far we've come. That's been done in certain people's lifetimes. You have 45 years of service and so from where you started in the processes, I mean, the aircraft

that we were flying were very simple, and when you look at the airplanes we're flying now and global positionings and all that kind of stuff it's just amazing.

**Hamilton:** I just mentioned to my wife last night about the GPS and the little automated office assistant, whatever you call them.

**DePerro:** The PDAs, Personal...

**Hamilton:** Personal Data Assistant. Anyway, and the guys out in the desert, there's no tree, there's no river, there's no, anybody needs to know where they are. That thing, it triangulates with a number of satellites and, oh, it's right here, here's where we are, right here. We were in Paris over the holidays with a guy and he had one, and I'm with a map, I love a map.

**DePerro:** All aviators love maps.

**Hamilton:** And, this guys was there, and I'm trying to figure out, okay, now we went down that river right here, and that damn map's not too good, but he had that little thing, and he punched in, he said oh, we're right there, see that hill, okay, I've got to get me one of those. Got to have it.

**DePerro:** Well, that's a whole other story, too, in terms of where you keep track of your cargo. I've talked to somebody just recently in doing a oral history, he said in Vietnam we considered it good if only 20% of the cargo was diverted and didn't make it. That's the story in which we were talking about with the stealing gas, as things move through the ports and all, it was this attrition that occurred all the time and it was just really hard to manage that. I think that we've really come a long way, we know where stuff is now.

**Hamilton:** Most assuredly. They've got tags now on containers that has the information on what's in the container, and when it goes by one of those devices reads it, it's in the port, and it's in the port until it goes by, gets on the ship, then it's out of the port, then it's somewhere else. Yeah, we've gotten to where, well, that's where they were going to get to become very sophisticated on what amount of stuff we had moving. That allows you to say that's enough. Like you said, no more ships because here's what's either in (?) sitting over there waiting for us to come over right now.

**DePerro:** My relative who's a software programmer works for a company in Maryland, and they make equipment to go on buses and trucks, truck fleets, so the manager can look on a computer screen and know exactly where every one of his assets are. And, that's



the sort of thing you can do with a bus line, you start making the bus... That's coming here, that's not a distant technology, that's being installed on commercial fleets right now out there so that the manager knows exactly where his stuff is. If someone has a load that needs to be picked up, you got out there and say where's the nearest truck? And, you can do that and even going off of your own network out into the private sector fleet saying I've got a cargo here, who's got a truck that's nearby that can swing in and pick it up and take it to Saint Louis, kind of thing. So, that's coming along very rapidly, and that's the case where the doctor that's trying to catch up with the technology. The technology is already there, and the technology is, the price of that stuff is all relative, but if you buy a bunch of it it really gets cheap. That's the sort of thing that the doctrine guys are scrambling to do.

**Hamilton:** And, remember like I said, if you're there too long you become fixated on the doctrine. And, it takes somebody new like I was telling you, the majors coming in and telling me this is not where the world is. Well, then this is why you're here. And, that's why it's critical that the Transportation School and all the other schools continue to have an infusion of personnel from the field back into the schoolhouse because otherwise we get locked stepped on what we think is the answer, and the answer is what we've been teaching, and the answer is on the answer sheet. And, we're taught to diverge more, and more, and more from what's going on, and we're wasting time. We get to a point where time is too critical to lose, it becomes an asset that we're throwing away, we don't have time for it.

**DePerro:** Also, because what happens is that people at the Department of the Army level and such are buying equipment and such based upon what they presume the doctrine to be. So, if you're buying the wrong equipment in the wrong ratios then even though the doctrine may not be right, what happens is that you get this disconnect between everything that's happening on this side of the ocean, with everything that's happening on that side of the ocean. I guess there was a time when it had to happen that way, the communication now should be such that you can move information back and forth to cross that way. When I was in Europe we could order a high priority part and have it in country in 48 hours, and that was coming from a factory in Boston. That was in the middle As, that would have been a high priority part, but lower priority parts were just

getting shipped in bulk to depots somewhere, and nobody really knew how much they needed, and it was a real old management nightmare to try to keep, for the commodity managers in the States to try to figure out what they had and where it was. And, stuff got wasted as a result of that. Is there anything that happened, you're now 45 years later into your, is there anything that you wouldn't have told anybody that happened that you'd be willing to tell now? Anything that happened in the old days?

**Hamilton:** I think I eluded to one about the hearing, when I was trying to get into flight school, I remember they had the old machine that would sit right next to you there, behind you, and go cluck, cluck, cluck, cluck, you push the button. The first time I took it I failed it. They guy says see here, you've got to hear on this line here, see yours goes like that. I said okay. And, I'd tell people he didn't tell me I had to hear it, but that line needed to go on there, so I figured out how do I make that happen. So, I got it, let's just figure this thing out here, and I figured it out, and flew for 20 years. Not for 20, but let's see, from 1963, of course after awhile I didn't fly, but 1963 till 1980. You just have to figure out some things. I think that is, I try not to hide too much, but sometimes you have to figure out how to get things done because that's the objective and you figure out how to do it. I pride daddy now, daddy doesn't have any education at all, he can barely write his name, and can't read anything, but he can sit down and say well you ought to be able to figure this out. And, at 94 years old he has been successful in getting through life and figuring things out, how to accomplish what he's working at here. At 94 his mind is very lucid and I think part of that is having to force it into coming up with an answer. At the same time I think we'll all go there. It's very easy for him to get switched, when the switch flips on it recycles the old doctrine, the old stuff, that he heard himself repeat a thousand times and that's the gospel, and don't confuse him with the facts. Being able to work things out, I think that's what the average military person does as you move into new jobs and things.

**DePerro:** It is kind of interesting because what you see, and you just said it, and that is the major arrives and says here's what the doctrine is but that's not what we're doing. What that says is somebody turned the major lose on his last assignment to figure out a better way to do it and allow him to do that, not only allow him to do it, probably encouraged him to find a better way to do it and he did. So, unlike some armies which



are pretty lock stepped, you have to do it the way Baghdad says or you get chopped kind of thing, our people are much more flexible and more versatile, so part of the mission of the school then is to try to keep up with all this, because you've got guys in Europe who are attempting to solve problems, you've got guys in Asia attempting to solve problems, you've got guys in Thailand, all of these different places everybody's trying to solve problems. You would like to think that when you give them the manual, like when you show up in Bangkok with the manual and it says this is what you do, well, some of it worked and some of it didn't.

**Hamilton:** And, you've got to figure out what portion you're wasting your time trying to make work because you're not going to change a nation into that book, culturally it ain't there because (?) means cop, don't worry about it. I'll give you an incident that wore some more hair out: We supported the boy scouts and USO and all that stuff like that over there, they could rent one of our buses and pay for the fuel and stuff like that and pay the driver's wages, you ain't going to do this (?), you've got to pay for it. And, there was a bunch of boy scouts out one day, they were supposed to be back I think around 1700, and the parents were all at the motor pool there with me waiting for the bus to come back with the kids. And, 1715 they're not here, 1730 they're not here. Mr. (?), this was the high supervisor, where the hell is the bus? Oh, Mr. whatever his name is, he's a good driver, he'll be here, no problem (?). Okay. After this at 5 o'clock he'll be back, 6 o'clock, okay. I don't think there's any problem to the parents, you all go on home, I will stay here and wait for the bus, as soon as the bus gets here I'll call you all and let you know, or we'll get the kids home, so not to worry, you all go on home. They trusted me. I had a pretty good reputation in Bangkok, they trusted me because I'm going to do the right thing. But, at 8 o'clock no bus comes, 9 o'clock, no bus of boy scouts. Bangkok is not a place that you can pick up and call the state police and say check this route here, you've got a wrecked bus somewhere. You can't call and get anything like that. So, get a vehicle and send the vehicle out to the waterfall, they went to visit a waterfall, 150 clicks away, and they should have been back here, and see where the bus is. No bus. Never came back. Okay, 9 o'clock, where in the hell is this driver and the bus. Go do it again, go stop by some of those police stations. I think it was about 7:30 the next morning the bus pulls in the motor pool, I've been there all night, the bus pulls in

the motor pool and the driver gets off, hey, he's just grinning, happy, and I'm thinking bring the driver over here, cop, where in the hell have you been? Oh, captain, I've been ride, I take all the boy scouts, my friend has a hotel and we took them to the hotel, they all had rooms, and I bought them all their food, everybody, they had a great time. He thought he did something real nice for them. The scouts had a ball, and he wore me out, took ten years off of my life. That culture, my worrying about it, screaming and hollering about it wasn't going to change it, remember I told you, got one guy killed because he tried to stop him from stealing gasoline, when you take it up to a point and let it alone. So, there were things like that throughout. I don't know how I got on that one.

**DePerro:** It was adaptability.

**Hamilton:** Oh, what was the adaptability, that's it, and you got to be adaptable to it, and one of the things...

**DePerro:** There's no place in the manual, in the Transportation Motor Pool manual, that talks about the managing of foreign...

**Hamilton:** No.

**DePerro:** It doesn't have to be foreign. After I retired I worked for a state agency in Virginia and it had hospitals all around the state, and there's a dramatic difference in the work ethic of the hospital in Petersburg versus the hospital in Stanton. Total different worlds, and they're part of the same system and everything and they had all the same job descriptions and all that stuff, but boy I'll tell you the way the plumbers worked down here and the way the plumbers worked up there were not the same.

**Hamilton:** You see, that's why the institution, the head, has got to be in constant contact with that one over there and this one over here because if you're going to lead them all you've got to know where they're all going and be able to tighten the ropes up a little bit because you need a certain level, the field needs to be a certain level at a certain point so he can count on what's going on.

**DePerro:** Sometimes what happens, too, is that the Army is a culture, so you have your own culture, you have your own food, and you own supply systems and all this kind of stuff, so when you go overseas you pick that up and you take that over there and you plop it down over there and it's going to function over there exactly the way it functions back over here. That's good in the sense that you take the culture with you so you don't have



to adapt to a new culture there. So, I can take a unit somewhere and I can get them to function there because I'm taking my culture with me. And, a lot of people who spend a tour in the military particularly back in the days of the draft and cycling, we had a lot of people cycling through, perceive the military as being a very straight laced, very structured, do it my way the highway kind of an approach to things because they were privates in units and the first sergeant had a way to do things and by God that's how you did them, and it didn't matter whether you were doing them at Fort Campbell or Fort Bragg, it was the Army way, it's the way you did it. What those people don't realize is that when you move above battalion that suddenly all those other things now start to come in to play, so functioning in the orient and functioning in Europe may be dramatically different, and the people at these higher levels are the ones who are wrestling with that, whereas the people down at this level are still doing it, you know, this is how truck companies function and it doesn't matter where you are kind of thing. That's a very interesting world view, and people who become generals sort of have to be the ones with the most adaptability.

**Hamilton:** (?) because as they go along they're able to see more of the forest and then they understand the other things that are involved, and they have to change. Every now and then I'm able to hear, well, this guy used to be at this level here, and now he's up there making a decision like this, he seems to have forgotten where in the hell he came from. That's probably not the case. At his level he has a broader perspective than you do, and he's got to make all things work and not necessarily satisfy this thing here that you're talking about here. In fact, from his position you're ox is the one that must be gored is we're going to get anything else done. That vision from there, and I think I was able to pry General Brown in that, I though he did a great job from moving from when I knew him as lieutenant colonel to colonel in charge of Transportation 7<sup>th</sup> Group and through the various positions that he went through. Was he the commandant at the school at some point, General Brown? Must have been. Yes he was, yes he was, because I remember when we had the New Year's reception, the annual holiday reception at an earlier date and he had the installation then, I remember that specifically. My wife thought it was a great idea.

**DePerro:** To have the New Year's Day celebration before New Year's Day?

**Hamilton:** It was the commander's name change or something like that which she thought was great. But, it was a change in tradition, and Dan Brown was the installation commander then, then he went on to CASCOT, then he was out at USTRANSCOM, and there, and I'm sure his vision was changed even more because then he was dealing not with just the Army, but across all services because he was deputy USTRANSCOM commander for, I don't know, a few years up until last year when he stepped down. So, as you move through the woods, particularly when you move to a higher level it changes. Somehow that message needs to be communicated as much as it can to the little guys down at the bottom because I remember you mentioned at the private level you can't see much, all you do is hear and you do. One of the things I learned as I moved up was you need to ensure that the troops get the word, keep the troops informed because it keeps them from being confused, and if you're rational in the way you explain it to them they understand it and you can get every bit of support out of them without beating them to death or making them do something that they don't quite understand.

**DePerro:** And, it's a two-way street, too. See, the reason the general goes to every person in the division and says are you going to Europe with us or not is because he felt that the only way that he could get good decision making out of people was to do that himself, and that's pretty interesting when you've got a general who's got 15,000 people in his division, he's going to ask everyone of them one at a time are you going with me to Europe or not, and hearing the discussion of that, it's the ability to get that first-hand data. So, a lot of what's going on, the technology improvements that have occurred that have allowed us to have a Desert Storm 2 go the way it went is these technology things that are going on, (?). It's not just technology in terms of well, I built a bigger fork lift that'll lift more stuff. We've got fork lifts about as big as we can build them now. It's the movement of the information now that's becoming the difference. When I was in Vietnam, the 9<sup>th</sup> Division had a team that were down in the depots and they would just drive to depot and look at the markings on boxes because the computer systems were so inaccurate they didn't know what they had. So, the drill was to just drive through the stacks, find something and say do we need flying gloves? There's a case of flying gloves. You go back, check the computer and another computer, phew. Well, that was a solution. I think we are moving away from those solutions now so that management can



kind of know where things are. The T School struggles with knowing that in terms not of boxes of flying gloves, but units of information about how problems are being solved in places. A lot of the manuals now are not coming out in hard copy anymore.

**Hamilton:** I can understand that.

**DePerro:** The reason for that is it's easier to change a CD, and you can do that monthly and change all kinds of stuff. Whereas before it would take years to get a manual changed.

**Hamilton:** Yeah, it sure would, and it was a laborious process that will not keep up now, won't support us now because the things are moving too fast.

**DePerro:** Yeah, the ideas can change faster than the manual can reflect it. It used to be a nightmare, too, to try to keep up with all that. It was a big pain to post all those changes. People have made careers out of doing that.

**Hamilton:** It was. That's right, well but that's history now.

**DePerro:** Well, it'll be interesting to see where our kids end up. Well, look at my grandmother who was born in 1898 and basically in an era, she left Italy on a horse and wagon, she left the village she was born in on a horse a wagon in 1902 because nobody had a car there. There wasn't even a road there. All the way to now with space flight and all those things that we're doing and even what we're doing here. The technologies that we're using to record this kind of stuff now is way beyond anything that we knew, had even 15 years ago.

**Hamilton:** I took daddy to Germany about two years ago, and he'd never been much further than the southeast United States, and still doesn't quite comprehend the Atlantic Ocean here and the Pacific Ocean over there because his view of the world has been that's pretty much it. So, we were, I don't know if we were going or coming then, I said you need to make a mental note because you're about seven miles up in the air eating breakfast. And, he said what? I said it's about minus 50 degrees outside out there, if you stuck your finger out there you could lose it real quick. And, those things were remarkable to him, and we've been down in South Carolina and he will relate things like that. One day I was seven miles up in the air eating breakfast. Ore, we'll be riding in the car and I'll take my cell phone and dial in my calling card number and call Germany and talk to my kids over there, and he's just amazed that that thing ain't got no wire hooked

to it, no it doesn't. So, the world is, and when I see that and I see how he relates to it, you've got to stay abreast of change, and he completely ground and he said I can't expect the world to go one the way it used to when I was coming along, you can't expect it. He says I have to try to keep up with it now. I said yeah, or you have to kind of get out of the way because you get run over. Up until last year he was driving a little bit and I finally had to get kind of ugly with him and convince him that you can't do that anymore. Well, he said, I know I'm old, I know I have to be careful, so I'm very careful when I drive. I said the problem is your too careful, I mean the cars are running 65 miles an hour and you're driving 35 miles an hour, you're in the way, you're going to get us all killed. When we finally got to the point where I really had to say if you insist upon driving go ahead, but when you kill somebody you've got nobody to blame but you. And, finally he was able to come to grips with you can just forget it, forget the whole deal about trying to drive. If we're not careful that's how we will go through life, kind of insisting upon what we've done in the past and it's a new day. But, I think that's a human tendency that we have that we all have to grow beyond that expectation that things ought to be the way we though they should have been, and I'm sorry, they'll never be that way again. He will say, boy, look at the cars, look at the cars out here, there are so many cars, and I'd say yeah, and make a note, this is as good as it will get. Tomorrow there will be more, and in ten years from now no telling what the number will be. So, that's the constant change that we've got to, and it's got to be an awareness thing, something that we make ourselves aware of on a kind of a continuous basis, because it's very easy for the mind to get into that rut and remember what I said about repeating what it's heard itself say so much? It thinks that this is what the deal is? And, that's where we'll all go, we'll stay there. The middle east is kind of a, nothing against the people or anything like that, but it's kind of a classic example of the futile age and this is the way it was and this is the way everybody is supposed to be. Can't you guys see where you are? Can't you see where the world is?

**DePerro:** Young people over there are, young people are, and that's sort of the hope I mean, all the news commentators saying what a disaster it is over there now culturally. There was a guy talking about Iran on the radio today, and basically said that the young people of Iran aren't believing the stories that their governments are telling them, or the



futile type religion. It's how you keep them down on the farm once they've seen Perry all over again. What the (?) is, is that even those things keep changing in some ways things stay the same in the sense that the way people react to change, some people react more positively than other people and the ones who react to it positively move forward than the ones who don't, don't. I guess what we have to do now is leave this to whoever ends up reading this someday or hearing this tape be interesting, hopefully it will be a long time from now that somebody will go back and look at that and figure out where are they on that spectrum. And, to learn the lessons that you're giving now, we seem to after most wars to forget all the lessons and we have to relearn them the next time out. Hopefully in our Army anyhow we've seen where the processes are now such that we're learning every war. We've got some other things to do, I guess we should shut the video off for awhile.